PARTISAN REVIEW

MARCH-APRIL, 1940

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America! America! (a story)

STEPHEN SPENDER
September Journal

SIDNEY HOOK
Max Lerner's Ideas

FRANK N. TRAGER
The Strange Case of F. L. Schuman

MARY McCARTHY
Saroyan on Broadway

JAMES T. FARRELL
The Cultural Front

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POETRY AND CRITICISM BY RANDALL JARRELL, ELEANOR CLARK, ELIZABETH BISHOP, BYRON A. VAZAKAS, MARYA ZATURENSKA, JOHN PEALE BISHOP.

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PARTISAN REVIEW

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September Journal

Stephen Spender

SEPTEMBER 3RD.

I am going to keep a journal because I cannot accept the fact that I feel so shattered that I cannot write at all. Today I read in the paper a story by Seymour Hicks of a request he gave to Wilde after his imprisonment, to write a play. Wilde said: "I will write a wonderful play with wonderful lines and wonderful dialogue." As he said this, Hicks realised that he would never write again.

I feel as if I could not write again. Words seem to break in my mind like sticks when I put them down on paper. I cannot see how to spell some of them. Sentences are covered with leaves, and I really cannot see the line of the branch that carries the green meanings.

It so happens that the world has broken just at the moment when my own life has broken. I mean not my life but my relationship with A——. Everything I read in the papers about broken faith, broken pledges, disloyalty, etc., seems about her. At the same time, not being a great statesman, I cannot use those words or call down the curses of God on her. For all I know, God may be on the side of the faithless, in private life, at all events. Or rather, I don't mean God, but that the very introduction of moral ideas makes everything, at this stage, meaningless. The moment I start thinking of right and wrong, I think, they may have done me a wrong, but I wonder Are they happy? Perhaps they have the secret of happiness, which I have lost. Perhaps their enjoyment of happiness makes them right and makes everything in my own mind, which is an endless argument, irrelevant.

Anyhow, I know that she cannot bear being with me when my forehead is split with anxiety. I drive a wedge through her on those occasions and she makes me feel that I am being cruel to her and almost treating her violently.

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The best thing is to write anything, anything at all that comes into your head, until gradually there is a calm and creative day. It is essential to be patient and to remember that nothing one feels is the last word; all feeling passes over one and as far as the life of the emotions goes there is only one rule: to wait. If Toller had waited, he would be one of the few people alive today who are happy about the war.

The most dangerous deception the emotions can practise on you is to pretend to be timeless and absolute. On top of despair, they impose a boredom which tells you that nothing is or ever will be worth doing, that all the words have broken into the separate letters of the alphabet and cannot be put together again. The whole of your life, they say, will be like this. Your unhappiness is no longer just a sensation, it is a fern growing through your whole body, and separating the brain. Not only is it going to be impossible for you now to do anything but just stare, without crystallizing your disparate sensations, but today too is expanding into an infinity of boredom. It is now ten o'clock, and one o'clock will not come: or not until a whole sea of empty agony has flooded your mind.

That is how Wilde must have felt sitting with his two boys at his marble-topped table in a café. That is how hundreds of people waiting for the News Bulletins on the wireless feel today. But there is another waiting which is not just the emptiness of waiting. That is the patient faith of waiting. Realising that everything is only an episode in the whole story, and that although one has no control over the episodes, one can gradually form the whole pattern, however terrible the setbacks of moments and even of years.

I must put out my hands and grasp the handfuls of facts. How extraordinary they are! The aluminum balloons seem nailed into the sky like those bolts which hold together the irradiating struts of a biplane between the wings. The streets become more and more deserted and the West End is full of shops to let. Sandbags are laid above the glass pavements over basements along the sidewalk. Last night during the blackout there was a tremendous thunderstorm. We stood at the bottom of Regent Street in the pouring rain, the pitch darkness broken intermittently by flashes of sheet lightning which lit up Piccadilly Circus like broad daylight.

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SEPTEMBER 4TH.

Greenwood and Sinclair were on the wireless last night. They talked about gallant Poland, our liberties, democracy, etc., in a way which raised very grave doubts in my mind. Greenwood even talked about fighting the last war to end war. Personally, I prefer Chamberlain's line to all this sanctimoniousness, which is that he has done his best to give Hitler everything but now feels that he can give nothing more. I dislike all the talk about God defending the right. God has always defended the right, and after such a long experience, he of all people should realise the utter futility of it. Personally, if I were a close adviser of God, I'd press him to decide the issue one way or the other once and for all and not go on playing this cat and mouse game between right and wrong.

The whole point of being a man is that there is no omnipotence on one's side. One doesn't have to choose between good and evil, right and wrong, but between various kinds of evil. It is not a conflict between God and the Devil, Christ and Judas, but between the systems represented by Hitler and Chamberlain.

With all humility, I am on the side of the Chamberlain system against Fascism. The fundamental reason is that I hate the idea of being regimented and losing my personal freedom of action. I carry this feeling too far, in fact, I must admit I carry it to the point of hysteria—i.e. the point where I would really fight. I dread the idea of being ordered about and being made to do what I don't want to do in a cause I hate. This fear has even forced me into a certain isolation, in which I find that the personalities of my fellowbeings often impose a restraint and unwelcome sense of obligation on me.

There you are, you analyse your hatred of Fascism and it comes to a desire to be left alone. At school you allowed the other boys to take your possessions from you, but finally there was something which you fought for blindly—the possibility of being alone. When you felt that they were compelling you to be like them, and never to get away from their system and their standards, you bit and scratched. The same is true of all your relations with people. When you feel that another personality is obstructing the development of your own, you feel an embarrassment which is really the repression of rage.

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Of course, there are other reasons, arising from this. As long as somewhere in society, in individuals, there are centres of isolation, there is also a possibility of development and change. Fascism is not even an aristocratic form of society in which the people at the top have windows in their minds, light within darkness, centres of air and space. They are just the levers which crush the lives below into a solid mass of weight and darkness. I am living all the time for the possibility of change. The life I love is now like a tepid current in a pond which threatens any moment to become one solid block of ice.

Well then, if war is madness and Hitler is mad, why reply to madness with madness? Why fight? Why not be a pacifist? The answers are (1) That I am not sufficiently a mystic to believe that if Hitler won we would not lose the values which I care about—the possibility of individual development, artistic creation and social change. (2) That in politics, the possibilities of acting effectively are always limited to certain very definite lines. They are not, as some people seem to imagine, extended to every possible idealistic and Utopian attitude. Given a war like the present, a pacifist is simply a person who has put himself politically out of action, and, who in so doing is probably helping the other side. Possibly helping the other side may sometimes further the cause of ultimate peace, but in this war I don't see how it can. Of course, there is a great deal to be got out of refusing to touch evil, in the way of saving one's own soul and being an example to future generations. But actually, personal salvation and getting myself into a morally correct position superior to my contemporaries, don't appeal to me, perhaps because I don't believe in a system of rewards and punishments in an after life. If I ran away it would be because I wanted to save my skin or get on with my work, not because I felt that even the world at war was unendurably wicked.

SEPTEMBER 5TH.

Oh, but books are crammed with all these arguments. If I started making speeches I would use them, and as I did so, I would feel a growing doubt in my own mind about their validity. I would be saying to myself "Yes, I do, really and truly, believe that, so why is this doubt growing like a fungus in my mind? Why do I

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imagine that someone over there in the corner is sniggering? That that man with hair too far back over his temples and wearing a brown tweed jacket knows the answer to everything I am saying? Gradually Conviction is seeping out of the hall, like water out of a tank, with every word I say."

Doubtless my own contempt for my father's recruiting speeches during the War is what undermines my faith in political arguments. When I start a train of argument it is like one of those trains on the Berlin underground which strut confidently above the street on their raised viaducts, surrounded below by the tenements which seem to ask whether after all everything is going quite so well as the passengers, flashing through the slums, seem to think.

I shall try to recollect Germany as it was 1929-1932 when I lived there for several months of each year. The people I knew there were not like the present rulers of Germany, not like the S.S. men, not like the army, though I think I understand the army. Germans have a greater capacity, I should say, than any other people, of evoking the idea of peace—Ruhe. To us and to the French, peace is a negative state when we are getting on with our business and private lives and are not at war. But to the Germans a state of peace is something positive and breathing and constructive, as opposed to a state of war. The positive idea of peace permeates a great deal of German romantic literature and music. Works like the slow movements of Beethoven's 2nd and 4th Symphonies are hymns to peace. They summon up a vision of a landscape exhaling peace. Daemmerung is a peaceful word, and words like Heim, Heimat, Friede, Ruhe, are loaded with a greater weight of emotion than the corresponding words in other languages. Other peace-music is Schubert's songs, Beethoven's early piano and piano-and-violin sonatas.

Perhaps it is that the German landscape is particularly peaceful. I think of the Rhine at evening, the Harz mountains, the shores of the Alster at Hamburg with the heavy scent of lime blossom on a summer evening.

I have a German relative who is the wife of a U-Boat Commander. They live in Kiel, which has just been bombed. She plays the piano very well. Recently she came to London and she played an early Beethoven Sonata to us at my grandmother's flat. After she had played the slow movement her face was streaming with

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tears. "Excuse me," she said, "but this music is so full of peace."

Ten years after the war, Germany was full of peace, it dripped with peace, we swam in peace, no one knew what to do with all the German peace. They built houses with flat roofs, they sunbathed, they walked with linked hands under the lime trees, they lay together in the pine forest, they talked about French art. Above all, everything was new, and everyone was young. They liked the English very much and they were sorry about the War. They talked about the terrible time they had during the inflation.

This was in Hamburg. I used to bathe, and I went to parties of young people. I had never enjoyed parties before and I never have since, but these were like living in the atmosphere of a Blue Period Picasso. Everyone was beautiful, and gentle, everyone was poor, no one was smart. On summer evenings they danced in the half light, and when they were tired of dancing they lay down in the forest, on the beach, on mattresses, on the bare floor. They laughed a great deal, smiling with their innocent eyes and showing well-shaped, but not very strong, teeth. Sometimes they let one down, sometimes the poorer ones stole, for example, but there was no Sin. I am not being ironic. There really was no sin, like there is in this kind of life in Paris or London.

Of course, it was all very superficial, it has been blown away now. I could not dance. I could not speak German. I stood rather outside it. I think now of the sad refugees who were the exquisite, confident Students of the Weimar Republican days. Perhaps it was all fictitious, but now in letting the mirage fade from the mind, I got very near to the truth, because everything in Germany is inclined to be fictitious. The German tends to think of his life as an operatic cycle emerging from a series of myths. There was the War, then there was the Inflation, then there was the period of Youth and the Weimar Republic, then there was the Crisis, then there was Hitler. Every German can readily explain him- or herself in terms of What We Have Been Through.

This passive attitude to life, the tendency to consider oneself a product of circumstances and environment beyond one's control, gives one the connection between the breakdown of external standards and the private standards of people. A young man fighting in the Spanish War wrote a poem to his beloved, beginning:

"Heart of the heartless world."

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He was either optimistic or very lucky. It would have been truer to write:

"Heartless one of the heartless world."

I was twenty in those days, and I was caught up mostly with the idea of Friendship—Freundschaft, which was a very significant aspect of the life of the Weimar Republic. This, if it was frank, was also idealistic. It was not cynical, shame-faced, smart, snobbish or stodgy, as so often in England. It was more like Walt Whitman's idea of camaraderie. I admit that I do not feel at all easy about this now, but I set it down for what it was. Two friends, young men, faced the world together, they camped, they travelled, they were happy in each other's company. There was usually a certain unpossessiveness about these relationships, a certain casualness, a frank and promiscuous admiration of beauty. The Germans had a reputation at that time of being homosexual, but I think it would be truer to say that they were bisexual, though there were of course a few of those zealots and martyrs who really hate women, whom one finds everywhere. But what the young, free, handsome German looked for in the world was a reflection of his own qualities in either man or woman. It was part of the myth that he should 'travel light' and have no responsibilities.

A life in which people are exercising sexual freedom without, apparently, anyone suffering or paying for it in any way, is attractive. One wonders how it is done. In this case, I think it was done at the price of making everything exist on the same level. The new architecture, the Bauhaus at Dessau, the social equality, the most casual affair, marriage, an abortion, a party, were all just the same. They were a pack of cards all of equal value precariously built up, so that when one fell, the whole house came down.

. . . . . .

Again and again I had experience of the German ignorance of Jews. Later, when Christopher Isherwood and I were staying on Insel Ruegen, and when the Nazis were doing exercises every evening in the woods and the "movement" had become a serious menace, I got to know one or two of these young men. They were not gay, irresponsible, intelligent, like my Hamburg friends. They were heavy, stupid, but friendly and well-meaning. They seemed perfectly content to lounge round all day sun-bathing, listening to

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the band, going to the dance hall in the evening and having their girls in the pine trees afterwards among the hungry mosquitoes. But actually their fun lacked lightheartedness. For instance, when they sunbathed, they would build little forts for themselves on the beach, set up a flag post, hoist a Nazi flag on it and gaze upwards in reverence. Whilst they were lounging round listening to the music, they seemed always to be waiting for a patriotic air, and when one was played, they would stand stiffly to attention.

I was with two of them on some such occasion as this when suddenly I lost my temper and said "Ich bin ein Jude!" They laughed incredulously: "You a Jew? Impossible. Why, you're the perfect Nordic type," said one of them. "You're tall, you have blue eyes, fair hair, Scandinavian features," said the other, "that's why we know and like you." This astonished me. "Then what do you think when you meet a Jew?" I asked. "We want to kill and destroy the pest," they said, "we want to crush him and knock him down." "Then knock me down," I said. "Here I am, I'm a Jew, please knock me down." They looked at me, dazed and injured by the deceptiveness of this wolf in Nordic clothing. I felt quite sorry for them. Then I got angry: "I dont believe you have any idea what a Jew looks like," I said. "You imagine a monster when really you have to deal with a human being. I don't believe you know what you're talking about, and your heads are stuffed with stupid hatred and lies." Probably I didn't know enough German to put it quite like that, but I worked myself up into a rage and rushed home to laugh with Christopher about it.

On another occasion someone made friends with me in a train specifically because I was of the Nordic type, and, indeed, now I know exactly the kind of warm response that a Nordic appearance arouses in some Germans. How can one understand the tremendous interest in appearance of a military race? A uniform face, in a uniform physique, dressed in uniform, and marching. In a way my Hamburg friends who wanted girls to be like boys and everyone to have a lovely face on a perfect body, had their craving for uniformity, too.

Certainly, 1929 was the beginning of the slump and the end of the efflorescence of the Weimar Republic. . . .

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SEPTEMBER 6TH.

I want to go on about Germany, about my landlord in Berlin, about Curtius, but I feel too tired, I can't go on. The first thing about any war is that everyone is tired, countries at war are countries of tiredness, fatigue becomes a spiritual experience. It becomes an illumination, fetters of habit which make one wash and shave every day, which make one preface every contact with one's neighbour with embarrassment, fall away, and one enters into a more easy relationship with one's fellow beings, an exhausted simplified state of being oneself. The wrong words which come into one's mind, which the rigid discipline of wakefulness would reject, are suddenly the right ones, everything flows freely and nervously, one does not even resent the heavy weight on one's eyes, because one sees so much light.

There was an air raid warning last night. A—— seems so far away now, I imagine her in her red dressing gown and she looks pale and dazed. I don't imagine her happily. But I imagine her tenderly. Perhaps in a few days I'll be able to think about her without reproach. Perhaps I'll get tired enough during this war to forgive her.

I remember again the water, the flowing line of the hills, the rich harvest quality of Germany. Immediately, of course, I suspect it of a certain falsity, a certain coarseness and thickness and monotony of texture, but still it is there, there like Wordsworth's poem about the peasant girl. E. took me all over the place. He had a little car, and when he wasn't watching the road, his eyes were on me watching the effect of the storks on the roofs of North German villages, of monkeys playing at the Hagenbeck Zoo, of the Harz mountains. "If you like music we shall have a great deal in common," he said when we first met, and if ever I admitted for one moment that I appreciated anything, his eyes were ready to smile: "Ah, we have a great deal in common."

So we went to the Harz mountains stopping on our way at Brunswick where we saw in a very dusty and deserted gallery one of the finest Rembrandt's I have ever seen. We visited some people called Harman who had a house in the Harz mountains. Like everyone else they had lost their money and all they had was the property itself and, I suppose, the salary of Professor Harman. The

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whole family, grandmother, son, daughter-in-law, a grandson, two daughters and a brother and sister who were fellow-students of Wolfgang, the son, at —— University, were there. Like nearly everyone I met in Germany at this time, they were obviously living from hand to mouth, they spent what they had, they laughed and talked a great deal, and yet they had an air of having lost everything. Wolfgang had rather pinched, vague features which had a certain pallid, distracted beauty which attracted me at the time.

Several years later, after Hitler's rise to power, Wolfgang came to visit me in London. Earnest, and pale as ever, he had a mission: he wanted to convert me to Naziism. "Of course, there are things I do not like about the Nazis," he said. "I do not agree with their views on literature and art. I do not sympathize with the persecution of the Jews. I do not accept their explanation of the Reichstag fire (though there is more in it than you would think). I do not like Goebbel's propaganda. In fact, I dislike everything nasty about them. But all they same, they have a Faith." Here his fists clenched and his eyes burned with a dubious mystery. "They have restored to us our belief in Germany and Life. Some of them are Idealists. There is a good deal of socialism in their economy." I raged as I had done before. I told him that the most dangerous propagandists of Naziism were people like himself who pretended that they did not approve of its bad qualities and yet had accepted it. I told him he was a dupe, and that the Nazis wouldn't care a damn about his footling little qualifications to satisfy his own conscience, so long as they had got him where they had got him. I said: "If I were a German, as I well might be, I would by now either be in a Concentration Camp or else deprived of every means of earning my living. You can't expect me to be fair. I don't care about your reasons." And I am ashamed to say that I kicked him out of the house.

This was an unnecessary piece of self-righteousness on my part, because I heard later that he became disillusioned about the Nazis and was one of those unhappy, pained, gentle creatures who represent the heart of another Germany, and do not understand what is happening to them. I have touched a deeper chord than I knew here, for have I not met two or three of them, don't I know very well the peculiar whiteness and stillness of their eyes, which seem to have been drained of pigment? These poor ghosts are

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really beautiful in a sexless way, because, if one is a young man of another era, naturally one cannot expect to be virile. How closely I press now upon a secret! Why am I always attracted by these desolate spirits? There was one whom I met on the Hook of Holland boat once shortly before Hitler's rise to power. He was the son of a general, and now that at least four names crowd on to me, I remember that they are all aristocrats and often close to the higher ranks of the army. I cannot remember the names exactly—oh yes, this boy was called Horst. He had a round face with very well-formed features, delicate lips, china blue eyes, a tender complexion and brown hair of an almost feathery lightness. He was quiet and polite, and he had some small out of the way interest (just as Wolfgang had a card-index in which he "collected" Shakespeare's imagery)—Horst's hobby was playing the flute or making musical instruments or something. There's really nothing much more to it than that. He had a Rhodes scholarship at Oxford and I used to call on him there and we went for walks and I introduced him to Shyah Berlin because he didn't seem to know anybody. But he never became part of the life at Oxford. He was always just as gentle, just as isolated, and gradually one saw beyond the varnish of his interest in the musical instrument—or whatever—to a distress and restlessness of spirit that never ceased. Shyah saw him several times and then confessed to me that the sustained slight sense of his unhappiness was too much: he no longer cared to see him.

Another such was surely Jowo von M—— who wandered about Europe looking at pictures. They all had some mild objective interest which obviously was not their life, but which covered their refusal ever to speak about Germany. Perhaps, like Wolfgang, when the Nazis first came to power they flamed with a momentary hope which soon disappeared as they reverted to their former hobbies. Werner von L—— was a more energetic variation on this type of German. When I first met him he was an ardent Social Democrat, in fact he was literally holding up in his rooms at Oxford a red banner which a Jewish girl with whom he lived had embroidered for a Peace Procession. When the Nazis came into power he took the complicated view that this after all was perhaps the socialism he had been fighting for. He was a law-student and he pretended to admire enormously the legal code which the

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Nazis introduced with their revolution. He forced, rather cruelly, the Jewish girl (who still used to visit Germany and camp with him in the woods) to admire this masterpiece. She told me that although she did not agree with the treatment of the Jews, etc., nevertheless, the documents in which the new laws were codified were marvellous. It was pathetic. I showed my lack of understanding again by fulminating.

* * * *

SEPTEMBER 8TH.

When I come to think of it, the trouble with all the nice people I knew in Germany is that they were either tired or weak. The young people in Hamburg were tired, the young Nationalist aristocrats were weak. How are the people of good will today to avoid weakness and fatigue?

SEPTEMBER 9TH.

Yesterday morning while I was waiting for a 'bus, some soldiers passed down the road singing "It's a long way to Tipperary." An unshaved and very ragged old tramp wearing the ribbons of several medals so loosely attached to his coat that they were almost falling off, said to me: "They're singing now, but they won't be singing when they come back. Hearing 'em sing reminds me of when I went out to fight in them trenches. We went out singing, but we didn't sing for long."

In the afternoon I got a taxi to Waterloo before going into the country. We were stopped near Southampton Row by five Frenchmen carrying a flag and singing the Marseillaise. The taximan said to me: "They won't be doing that for long."

Peter Watson travelled from Paris to Calais a few days ago in a troop train. The compartment was crowded with soldiers. They sat all the way in absolute silence, no one saying a word.

SEPTEMBER 10TH.

> "The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity."

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W. B. Yeats, who wrote these lines, himself became a fascist sympathiser. He was prepared to accept the worst. He wanted strength at any price.

Why were the gentle and kind people I knew in Germany, tired or weak?

The tiredness of our generation consists in exploring unimportant and superficial aspects of the idea of freedom, without trying to discover the strong basis on which any really free life must be built. Freedom, the young people in Hamburg said, is sexual freedom primarily, then freedom to enjoy yourself, to wander, not to make money, not to have the responsibility of a family, or the duties of a citizen, generally. Freedom is one long holiday. They were tired. What they wanted, in fact, was a holiday.

Beware of people who explain themselves in terms of the difficult childhood they have had, the economic conditions of their country since the war, and everything, in short, that they have been through. Beware of people who say: "You don't understand me."

After 1929, it became obvious that the world of these irresponsible Germans was threatened.

"New styles of architecture, a change of heart."

The architecture was mostly swimming baths built with money raised from American loans. The change of heart, sunbathing and sexual freedom, was almost as uneconomical an investment as the new architecture. That's to say, although it produced a charming little shoot, it didn't take root in the stony and barren soil of the difficult post-war years.

I feel uneasy about discussing these things in an airy, Left Book Club manner, suddenly identifying myself with the Workers, in order to sneer at the people with whom I spend my week ends, and dismissing my own promiscuous past as though I have renounced it finally. The fact is that I have just had a first class failure in my personal life, and I am so full of regret and bitterness that I cannot stay in the country because I dream of nothing else.

However, important as these things are, the first sign of the "German tiredness" is to treat them as though nothing else were more important. My friends in Hamburg behaved as though nothing mattered in life except sex and personal relationships, and at

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the same time they kept these problems in a state of perpetual, unsolved, pleasurable suspense.

But if a human relationship becomes more important than anything else in two people's lives, it simply means that there is a lack of trust between these two people. A relationship is not a way of entering into a kind of dual subjectivity, a redoubled and reciprocal egotism, it is an alliance of two people, who form a united front to deal with the problems of the outside world, and who understand that their trust in each other will not be broken up by impertinent outsiders. The problem of married people is not to become absorbed in each other, but how not to become absorbed in each other, how, in a word, to trust one another, in order to enter into a strong and satisfactory relationship with the society in which they live.

A great cause of weakness today is people putting less important things before those that are more important, for example, personal relationships before work and an objective philosophy of life, sex before love. People who put personal relationships before their work become parasites on each other, form mutual admiration societies, agree to do nothing that may make one jealous of the success in the world of the other. People who put sex before love flee from one marital relationship to another, using love as their excuse; because, for them, sex has become a thing in itself, dissociated from personal relationships. They have an image in their minds of one hundred per cent. sexual satisfaction, and when they are in love, they are continually asking themselves "Am I satisfied?", and they are continually tormented by the thought that perhaps they are not. For them love, at first an opportunity, soon becomes a trap, forcing them to give something instead of taking all the time, and preventing them from grasping at the possibly greater delights they might get elsewhere.

Satisfactory personal relationships exist when the people who enjoy them have a satisfactory relation with society. They exist within society, they are not a conspiracy against society. In the same way, satisfactory sex exists within love and can be attained through love, which means patience and loyalty and understanding.

Another cause of weakness is not to admit, but to pursue our failures blindly. There is such a thing as real failure in personal relationships and in sex. How easily then, that which symbolises failure, the poor substitute improvised for love, becomes the most

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important thing in life! How people build it up and call the scars of failure their dazzling successes! Masturbation, homosexuality, following people in the streets, breaking up relationships because one has failed in one's own, all these compensatory activities form a circle of Hell in which people can never rest from proving that their failures are the same as love. Yet the lives of countless men and women show that the great compensation lies in accepting failures as failures, and recognizing substitutes as substitutes, and making the most of the rest of one's life. In fact the great artists and poets have almost without exception been failures in life. By this I mean that their relations with their fellow beings were really and truly at some point unsatisfactory, that most of them were fully conscious of this, and that their honesty in admitting a defect restored to their lives a sense of scale which hopelessly neurotic people lack. Baudelaire's relationship with a negress, the breakdown of Gauguin's marriage which led him to go to the South Seas, Van Gogh's failures in love, Rilke's wanderings and sense of being *outside* love, to mention only a few examples which immediately come to mind, were all real failures in life and to "the man of genius" the failure to be a complete man must always be a humiliation. The compensations of genius are so dazzling that it is difficult to realise that Beethoven and Balzac paid so great a price, when they yet had the infinite privilege of being Beethoven and Balzac. They suffered as men, they rejoiced as creators.

The creative artist realises that art is not a complete life, otherwise he would be self-sufficient, he would isolate himself from the world of ordinary living, and there would be happy, unreal artists creating a truly pure art. Some people, who are not artists, or who are bad artists, think that art is like this, a world cut off from the world, where aesthetic experience is everything. These are the virtuosi of art and of appreciation: spirits which have flowed completely into an aesthetic medium, without the friction of living their lives.

Of all the arts, music provides the most self-sufficient alternative world removed from the real world. Painting is the most objective of the arts because visual imagery always has a direct reference to real objects, and in order to get away from the broad day, painters have deliberately to paint visual experiences remembered from sleep—dreams. But music is not a dream that imitates

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our sleep, it is a world of its own, full of abstract aural patterns, which are not recognizably related to the noises we hear in everyday life. At the same time it creates a world of tremendous conviction. The absolute ideas which have such a wavering meaning in words and which it puzzles us to attach to human behaviour, have their fixed places in music. Schiller's Ode to Liberty is a work which conveys little more to us today than a sense of enthusiasm for ideas which meant a great deal to Schiller but which the time between him and us has cast a doubt if not a slur upon. But in the music of the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony these ideas are fixed in a world of their own which one can enter without referring it back to the real world and the disillusion of the past hundred years.

Actually the value of the music lies in the fact that it does nevertheless refer back to the real world of experience. The triumph of art is not merely a triumph over technical difficulties, but the triumph of resolving the conflicts of life into a more enduring form of acceptance and contemplation. To regard these great acts of acceptance—the masterpieces of art—as acts of rejection and escape, is simply a way of losing grip, it is letting the engine run without the wheels turning. If one looks at the faces of people in a concert one can see the difference between those who use music as a form of living and those who use it as a form of dying. The virtuoso of listening is, like the virtuoso of performing, a wonderful child, one who has never grown up but melted himself on the furnace of great works of art where he continually flows away. The people who are not virtuosi have a certain sculptural rigidity —the face of Schnabel or Toscanini—because they are always discovering a unity between the experiences of life and art.

The young aristocratic sons of German militarists whom I call "weak," were trying, without much conviction, it is true, to use the appreciation of art as a complete way of living, and as an escape from their despair about Germany. But this does not work. You go to the concert and music offers an interior life of sounds inside your head which is as complete as anything you have experienced. You read a play of Shakespeare, and you enter into a love and a courage of feeling completer because more explicit and final than anything that your own life may provide. "This is where I live most intensely," you think. "This is real for me. Everything

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else can be put aside and forgotten." But it can't. The felt life in the work of art is only intense, and often painful, because it actually touches the life of deep and terrible experience. Without this experience, art would simply express a frictionless tendency towards a vacuous perfection. But in true art there is a real conflict of life, a real breaking up and melting down of intractable material, feelings and sensations which seem incapable of expression until they have been thus transformed. A work of art doesn't say "I am life, I offer you the opportunity of becoming me." On the contrary, it says: "This is what life is like. It is even realer, less to be evaded, than you thought. But I offer you an example of acceptance and understanding. Now, go back and live!"

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Elizabeth Bishop

THE FISH

I caught a tremendous fish
and held him beside the boat
half out of water, with my hook
fast in a corner of his mouth.
He didn't fight.
He hadn't fought at all.
He hung, a grunting weight,
battered and venerable
and homely. Here and there
his brown skin hung in strips
like ancient wall-paper,
and its pattern of darker brown
was like wall-paper:
shapes like full-blown roses
stained and lost through age.
He was speckled with barnacles,
fine rosettes of lime,
and infested
with tiny white sea-lice,
and underneath two or three
rags of green weed hung down.
While his gills were breathing in
the terrible oxygen
—the frightening gills,
fresh and crisp with blood,
that can cut so badly—
I thought of the coarse white flesh
packed in like feathers,
the big bones and the little bones,
the dramatic reds and blacks
of his shiny entrails,
and the pink swim-bladder
like a big peony.
I looked into his eyes
which were far larger than mine
but shallower, and yellowed,

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the irises backed and packed
with tarnished tinfoil
seen through the lenses
of old scratched isinglass.
They shifted a little, but not
to return my stare.
—It was more like the tipping
of an object towards the light.
I admired his sullen face,
the mechanism of his jaw,
and then I saw
that from his lower lip
—if you could call it a lip,
that grim, wet, almost-weapon—
hung five old pieces of fish-line,
or four and a wire leader
with the swivel still attached,
with all their five big hooks
grown fast in his mouth.
A green line, frayed at the end
where he broke it, two heavier lines,
and a fine black thread
still crimped from the strain and snap
when it broke and he got away.
Like medals with their ribbons
frayed and wavering,
a five-haired beard of wisdom
trailing from his aching jaw.
I stared and stared
and victory filled up
the little rented boat,
from the pool of bilge
where oil had spread a rainbow
around the rusted engine
to the bailer rusted orange,
the sun-cracked thwarts,
the oarlocks on their strings,
the gunnels,—until everything
was rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!
And I let the fish go.

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John Peale Bishop

THE YANKEE TRADER

An old sofa has been abandoned
At the *Yankee Trader,* an old sofa
Has been left out in the snow.

Slightly lopsided, it still proposes
With its faded roses positions for courtships
Proper and posied against the snow.

With its sodden roses under the snow
And its stiff scrolls, the sofa recovers
The stiffer backs and the sobbing postures:

A coffin treading on legs through doors,
A family fading into the snow.
The doors are closed on the *Yankee Trader.*

An old sofa, coldly abandoned,
Might still support, more patient than lovers,
The fall of snow on its final roses,

Outstaying men's, may still withstand
Eternal fault in the falling elements,
A stiff wind and the approaching snow.

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Byron A. Vazakas

From "POEMS FOR THE END OF 1939"

II.

Because everything is conceived in pain
Because man is born of violence and despair
Because everything is paid for
Because his arrival is heralded by coins
And coins deny the eyeball its stark gaze
Because the abortion that he might have been
Could have departed only in the nightmare of money passed
This is inscribed in the baldest outline
Where the natural functions cycle with the wheel
Of all that a man is or might be or was
When his ancestors, reduced to birth or death
Recognized in the shuddering butterfly of agony
The depravity of that divine animal, the sure thing

Made fearful by the auspice of a world
Made fearful by the menace of its end
Made fearful by an omen in a dream
Made fearful by the lack of means

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Marya Zaturenska

SILENCE AND THE WAYFARER

"Now the sirens have a still more fatal weapon than their song, namely their silence. And though admittedly such a thing has never happened it is still conceivable that some one might possibly have escaped from their singing but from their silence certainly never."—*Franz Kafka.*

Enter the siren silence, wave upon glittering wave,
From land's end, to sky's height, the age unloosens,
Its emissaries of death, bland grace on mobile waters,
Veiling destruction and the suicide's madness,
See a child's world unfolds, petal on petal, leaf on leaf
The fatal island smiling in the sea,
Vainglorious arches, towering obelisks,
Enormities and splendors seen in sleep,
Hear sweet lips singing the unbearable psalm,
Always unheard! the opening floods of song, heavy and calm.

From that deep sea where Love's own mother rose,
We turn away; now is our journey ended,
Now is our ship embarked on homeward waters,
We have survived; spirits of the darkening waves,
Survived the treacherous waters, jagged rock, the ocean precipice
Where sit the voiceless sirens, whitely gleaming
Green-gilt hair, eyes of sea-green, blue-veined bodies, foam tinted
Thrilling the wayfarer with love of danger.

The rush of choral rivers silenced and strong,
Is in our ears forever. Inarticulate as the still sirens,
Our speech shall be. We have not heard but *felt,*
That hooded song, that gaping melody,
O not in long lost Ithaca shall Odysseus rest,
And watch the hearth's fat flame,
For the old siren-silence stirs the blood,
Forever moving with the moving waves,
Imagination rises from the sea.

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America! America!

Delmore Schwartz*

WHEN BELMONT WEISS the musician returned from Paris in 1934, he found that he had very little to do. He was unable to work with the great fluency and excitement he had enjoyed when he was younger and something had happened to the people he had known before going to Europe. The depression had happened to them; the full sense of it had, after years, wholly modified their hopes and desires. The boys with whom he had gone to college not only no longer lived in the same neighborhood, but in addition they saw little of each other and were embarrassed when they met. What impressed Belmont most of all was the modification of the sense of humor which had prevailed among them. After a few visits, Belmont gave up his effort to renew the old friendships; for he saw that they no longer existed.

However, he was not bored. He wished very much that he were back in Paris again, and he hoped to be able to go back again next year, foolishly enough as it turned out. Meanwhile he was taking it easy, as his mother said. He was enjoying an ease, an indolence, a sense of relaxation which seemed unwarranted and peculiar to him. But he had done so much work during the previous year that a period of inactivity seemed unavoidable. Or so, at least, he told himself, in facile self-consolation.

He would sleep late every morning and then sit for a long time at the breakfast table and listen to his mother's endless conversation while she went about her household tasks. It was simple for Belmont to alternate his attention between his mother's inexhaustible talk and the morning newspaper. The sunlight made the kitchen's whiteness pleasant, the apartment was well-heated, the newspaper was interesting, and Belmont would take another cup of coffee and turn the page when he saw that his mother was about to tell her nominal audience the story of one of her friends, a sub-

*The characters in this story are not to be identified with any actual persons. This is a work of fiction in the full sense of the word.—D. S.

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ject she enjoyed more than any other except for the story of her own life.

One morning, however, Belmont had begun to feel somewhat uneasy about his enjoyment of these two hours of breakfast. He had done nothing, he had not even listened to music for a week, and as he explained in a letter, "when I am not working, I begin to feel 'unreal'." But on this morning, his mother's story began to interest him very much. Indeed her conversation had come to interest him more and more, although she always talked of people who did not interest him in the least, relatives, old family friends, neighbors of ten years back. Mrs. Weiss had begun to tell her younger son of her friends, the Baumanns. She would have preferred her older son, who was a lawyer, and the substantial son, as her audience. But it really did not matter, since she was ironing yesterday's wash, and conversation was not only a delight in itself, but made one forget the repetitive monotony of ironing.

The Baumanns, Mrs. Weiss reminded Belmont, had been the ones who gave Belmont a silver spoon when he was born. She brought forth the spoon from one of the drawers under the cupboard where she kept the dishes and showed Belmont his initials engraved in twining letters upon the top of the spoon which was now twenty-five years old. The acquaintance of the Baumanns and the Weisses, which intermittently involved years of close friendship, dated back many years to a period just before the turn of the century. Belmont's father, who was now dead, had been a young man of twenty-two when he had gone into what was then called the insurance *game* (the word rang in Belmont's mind when his mother used it, for she had a fine aural memory for the speech she had heard other people employ). Mr. Baumann had already established himself in this field of endeavor with a moderate amount of success. In fact, the insurance business was ideally suited to Mr. Baumann's temperament.

Belmont's mother proceeded to explain in great detail just why the field of insurance provided so genial a medium for a man of Mr. Baumann's tastes and inclinations. Insurance involved the important matter of finding one's way into the homes and the confidences of those who were going to be insured. Insurance could not be sold as a grocer or druggist sells his *goods* (Belmont was moved again) by waiting for the customer to come to you. Nor

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could you, like the book salesman, go from house to house, plant one foot in the doorway, and start talking before the housewife has a chance to shut the door in your face. For insurance, it was necessary to become friendly with a great many people, who would come to know you and like you and trust you, who would listen with respect to you and take your advice. You had to join various lodges and societies of your own class and race.

This necessity worked no hardship on Mr. Baumann, for he enjoyed groups and gatherings of all kinds; he enjoyed them intensely. In his youth he had belonged to the societies of people who had come from the old country, and upon his marriage, he had joined his wife's Association. Then he had joined a masonic lodge, and besides this, he participated in the social life of the neighborhood synagogue, though he was actually an admirer of Ingersoll. In this way, he had come to know a great many people, and he visited them with unfailing devotion to his love of sociability. To visit a friend was an involved activity for him. It required that he come into the house with much amiability (telling his host that he had been thinking and talking about him the other day) and announce that he had only *dropped* in for a few moments. Only after protestations of a predictable formality would he permit himself to be seated for a cup of tea. Once seated, said Mrs. Weiss (imposing from time to time her own variety of irony upon the irony which sang in Belmont's mind at every phase of her story), once seated it was hours before Mr. Baumann arose from the dining-room table on which a fresh table-cloth had been laid, and from which the lace cover and the cut-glass had been withdrawn.

Mr. Baumann drank tea in the Russian style, as he often explained. He drank it, that is to say and as he often said, from a glass, not from a cup; a cup was entirely out the question. And while he drank and ate, he discoursed inimitably and authoritatively upon every subject, but especially upon Judaism, the private life of European royalty, and the new discoveries of science, for these were his favorite subjects. A silent amazement would sometimes grow among his auditors at the sheer length of time that he could continue to eat and drink, while talking; until at last, since there was little else left upon the table, he would absentmindedly take up the crumbs and poppyseeds on the tablecloth.

Even as a young man (Mrs. Weiss had not known him until

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he was in his forties), it was said of him that he looked like a banker. As he grew older and became quite plump, this impression was emphasized. He took to pince-nez glasses and handsome vests delicately lined at the top with white, the whole view enhanced by gold watch and chain, and resembling, as Belmont remembered, certain photographs of the first J. P. Morgan. His friends were generally delighted by most aspects of his being, but particularly impressed by his appearance. They could be shamed, often enough, into allowing him to *write* some insurance for them. It was a time of general prosperity for these people. They were rising in the world, most of them, after having come to America as grown children, and they could afford an insurance policy, just as they could afford to look down on newcomers to America and on their own selves in earlier years, a state of being for which the special term, *greenhorn,* had been created. But most of all, they liked Mr. Baumann. They were flattered by his company. When he paid a visit, he conferred upon the household a tone of being well-informed, even of intellectuality, which pleased the husband because of what it implied to the wife, the implication being that although he, the husband, was too busy a man in the dress business to know much of these worldly matters, yet he was capable of having as a friend and *bringing into the house,* this friendly and cultivated man who spoke English with a Russian accent which was undoubtedly *refined.*

After a time in the insurance business there is no urgent need to acquire new customers and new policies. One can live comfortably on the commissions due one as the premiums continue to be paid from year to year. It is true that one must keep up one's acquaintance with the policy-holder and see to it that the stress of hard times does not make him foolish enough to give up his policy and cease to pay the premiums. But this need of assuring your clients, urging or cajoling them into continuing their policies, does not, or did not in those days interfere with the habit of sleeping late in the morning and making one's breakfast the occasion for the most painstaking scrutiny of the morning newspaper. Indeed, one can go for vacations in the Catskills or at Lakewood whenever one pleases, and this Mr. Baumann and his family often did. They went at least four times a year, usually during the high holy days, during Passover, sometime in the summer, and during the week

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between Christmas and New Year's. In fact, Mr. Baumann had quite frequently written some of his best policies during the general high spirits which are the rule during vacations and at resorts. He was undoubtedly at his best during such times and amid such circumstances.

At this point, Belmont recognized in his mother's tone the resentment she had always felt toward those who lived well and permitted nothing to interfere with their enjoyment of life. It was the resentment of one who felt no inclination, herself, to live well, and regarded it as unjustified except on the part of the very rich or during vacations.

An insurance man, however, has one urgent duty, the necessity of putting in an appearance at the funerals of those he has known even very slightly. This attendance is a perfect way in which to pay tribute to one of the irreducible facts upon which the insurance business is based. Moreover, it provides a basis for useful conversation. "Yes," Mr. Baumann would say, "I was at L-----'s funeral today." His tone implied the authoritative character of his presence. "Yes!" He would reiterate emphatically, "We all have to go, sooner or later!" And as he squeezed the lemon into his tea, he dwelt upon various aspects of the funeral, the children's lack of understanding, the widow's hysterical weeping, the life-like appearance of the corpse. "He looked," Mr. Baumann would say, "just like he was taking a nap." However, apart from *doing business,* Mr. Baumann enjoyed funerals for their own sake. They were representative meetings of people with whom he had everything in common and to whom he was a very interesting and well-informed man, and even, so he seemed to himself at times, a sage without rabbinical trappings.

Mrs. Weiss finished ironing a tablecloth with the greatest precision and neatness. She folded it carefully, placed it with the other garments already ironed, and took a new piece, permitting herself no pause in her monologue.

Mrs. Baumann, she continued, was the one person who was unable to take Mr. Baumann with the seriousness he expected and received in all quarters. She preferred the rabbi of the neighborhood synagogue whenever there was a need for neighborhood sages. She and her husband shared so many interests that there was naturally a good deal of antagonism between them. Whatever gentle-

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man happened to be occupying the rabbinical position in the neighborhood surpassed her husband at his own game, so far as she was concerned, surpassed him in unction, suavity, and fecundity of opinion.

Mrs. Baumann was small, almost tiny next to her large and heavy husband, and nervous, fussy, anxious, while he was always assured and in company merely moved to smile when she attacked him with ironic remarks and told him that he was talking too much. Really, however, they loved the same things, and her resentment sprang from his being free to pursue a social life while she was burdened with the ceaseless activities involved in bringing up three children. Toward her children, toward her friends, toward all things Jewish, she directed an inexhaustible charity and indulgence and interest, so much so that she neglected her own household because she spent so much time visiting, like her husband, and telling in patient detail endless stories of her children, of friends, and of Jewish activities. In this period a short time before the World War, Freud and Bergson were chronicled in the Jewish newspapers as Jews who had made a great success in the wide world, and Mrs. Baumann relished their fame to the extent of making out, mistakenly enough, the nature of their doctrines. In this way, Belmont's father, who visited the Baumann household very often before his marriage, learned of the doctrines of Freud and passed them on to the salesmen who worked for him in the real estate business.

There was only one thing which Mrs. Baumann enjoyed more than finding out that a successful inventor or musician was Jewish; and that was to hear of some new fad, especially if it had to do with food. She herself often spoke of herself as having a new *fad* and believing that everyone should have fads; for the word pleased her and its full connotation had escaped her when she first heard of it. She said often that she wished she were a vegetarian.

Belmont became nervous as he listened. He was not sure at any given moment whether the cruelty of the story was in his own mind or his mother's tongue. And his own thoughts, which had to do with his own life, and seemed to him to have nothing to do with these people, began to trouble him.

As the Baumann children grew up, they seemed to gain a great deal from the intensive social life of the household. For the

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small apartment near Eastern Parkway where they lived came in the end to be a kind of community center on Sunday nights, and all whom Mr. Baumann met in his leisurely round of business were invited there. Both husband and wife knew very well how glad lonely people are to have a house to come to when they have been thrown from the old country into the immense alienation of metropolitan life. And the Baumanns knew too, although they would never have wished to express the belief, that it was very important to have something to eat amid the talk, for people do not continue very long without the desire to eat; besides, the conversations, the stories, the jokes, the comments, are heightened, improved in quality, excited by the food and beverages, and the food one gets in another's household seems *exceptionally appetizing*.

Belmont, listening, tried to go back by means of imagination to the lives of those people. Certainly there were times in the old country when food was very scarce, so that one of the most wonderful things about America was the abundance of food. It was impossible, however, for Belmont, who had always been well-fed, to convince himself that he knew what their states of mind in regard to food could have been. He returned to his mother who was still painting scenes of the Baumanns' social life on Sunday nights.

The Baumann children grew up amid these pleasant circumstances of much sociability and *company*. Each of them acquired social talents which earned gratifying applause from the visitors, who were expected, in any case, by an unseen, unspoken understanding, to make much of the children of any household they visited socially. Dick, the oldest, learned to play the piano very cleverly and to recite limericks and parodies. Sidney, the youngest, was enchanted by the Sunday nights and went so far as to bring his neighborhood cronies, the boys who lived on the same *block,* to the house. This was something most children avoided out of a general shame that their parents spoke broken English. Sidney showed much less talent than his brother, but was well-liked by all partly because he was small and *cute;* partly because he was so fond of the company. Martha, the girl, suffered from the intense aversions and shames and frustrations of girlhood, and as her father said, she took it out on the piano, playing romantic music day and night. She was very *smart* and clever, and her remarks, when she was no more than fifteen, were sometimes so biting that

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she would be scolded helplessly and vainly, but tirelessly by her mother. Outsiders, however, were charmed, not annoyed, when she was *fresh.* When she was older, she defended herself by saying that she had learned her wit at the Sunday night school of gossip, when the whole company devoted itself to analyses of the failings of their absent friends. Nevertheless, despite her bitter remarks and comments on whatever went on in the household, she loved its whole régime very much, although she was annoyed to find that she depended upon it so much for her day-by-day food and drink of the spirit.

It was about the time that the two older children, Dick and Martha, were getting old enough to need jobs that Belmont's father and Mr. Baumann went into partnership in the real estate business. Belmont's father had been in this business for some time and he had made a good deal of money. But at this time his need of capital (which he could have procured elsewhere) and his fondness for the company of the Baumanns, had made him offer Mr. Bauman a partnership. It was an offer made in a moment of weakness, when he had just enjoyed a good dinner at the Baumann household. Whenever Belmont's father was very pleased and had enjoyed himself, he suffered from such generous impulses, which did not, however, prevent him from repairing the evil consequences of his act with an equally characteristic ruthlessness when it became clear that his generosity had not only been costly (for in that case, he could forget it), but would be of a continuing costliness.

This is what happened very soon with the partnership. Mr. Baumann and Dick soon showed Belmont's father that their habits of living were not going to be altered by the fact that they were members of a *going concern.* Father and son arrived at the office an hour before noon, which gave them time to go through the mail before going out for an unhurried lunch. Both of them drew handsome salaries from the business, which troubled Belmont's father more than anything else. When it was a question of selling a plot of land or a house to a customer, Mr. Baumann often allowed his interests of the moment, which were usually international in scope, to make him forget entirely the need of persuading the customer to make *the deal.* He ingratiated himself with the prospective customer all the time; but that very process ingratiated the customer with Mr. Baumann, a situation in which the mutual bloom of

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friendship soon made business matters either unimportant or a question of tact and delicacy. Dick followed in his father's footsteps and took customers to the ball game, which was well enough except that he too forgot the ulterior purpose of such expenditures of time, energy, and the firm's money. In three short months, Belmont's father appreciated his error and spent a week of bad half-sleepless nights trying to figure out the easiest way to free himself of his pleasure-loving partner and son. Finally, and as always, he solved this problem in the most brutal way by sending them a letter informing them of his grievances and dissolving the partnership. This summary dismissal ended the friendship between the two families for a time. But Mr. Baumann was really unable to sustain a grudge, although his wife certainly could and did in fact *pester* him about his weakness in forgetting the injuries done to him by his ostensible friends.

Dick Baumann could not manage to hold down any job for any length of time and as yet he showed few signs of making his way in the world. But he did seem to make an immense number of friends everywhere and to be in request all over Brooklyn because he was literally always the life of the party. It was at one such party that he met his future wife, a beautiful girl who had already begun to make a good living by running her own beauty parlor. She was the only child of a mother who had been deserted by her husband and she had never been so charmed before as she was by Dick's various activities in company, his parodies, imitations, songs, pranks, and his fine air of well-being and happiness. Somewhat perplexed by the girl's adoring looks, Dick had invited her to the Baumann ménage, where Mrs. Baumann immediately fell in love with her. Dick was nothing if not suggestible, and Mrs. Baumann was the only strong-willed one in the family. She arranged matters in a variety of ways and after a certain amount of urging upon her part, all parties involved recognized the inevitability of the marriage. But Dick had first to make a living; his wife had her handsome business, which she *ran* with a cousin of hers. But this situation offended Mrs. Baumann's sense of propriety. She expected and expressed her expectation that it would end very soon. She insisted that it must end before the two were married. She could not tolerate the idea that her daughter-in-law not only worked for a living, but also that she made more

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money than her son did, and she would not countenance the marriage until Susan gave up her business. Dick, however, was in no particular hurry to get married. He did want to please his mother, for this was one aspect of his desire to please everyone, the whole world. But he enjoyed being *single* from morning to night and did not conceive of his marriage as enforcing any change in his habits. It meant merely another addition to his wide circle of acquaintances.

Belmont listened to his mother's account with increasing absorption, but again and again his own thoughts intervened and he reflected on his separation from these people. It seemed, and it seemed sad and unfortunate, that he was a thousand miles away from them in every sense. He was separated from any kind of life from which he could draw satisfaction and gain recognition and dignity. His interests belonged only to himself and a few other widely dispersed people like himself. When he had satisfied his objectives, no one or almost no one would be pleased, essentially. These people of whom he was hearing—not for the first or last time—should have been his genuine relatives and friends, for he had lived surrounded by their lives since the day of his birth. But he was an artist and an artist of the kind that could only be a monster to them in every actual way, although they would be pleased when his name and picture appeared in the newspaper. This particular lower middle-class from which he came produced opposites of itself, sheer perversions of all that it had worked for and wanted, children contemptuous of every aspect of their parents. These thoughts had occurred to him often enough before, and he had dismissed them each time as he was now going to, by supposing that he dramatized the matter, and by assuring himself that the situation had little to do with his true work as a musician.

His mother had gone up to the roof to take some more wash down from the line. She told Belmont that it was time he was getting dressed (he had been sitting at the table garbed in dressing gown and pajamas), but before he had a chance to reply, she resumed her story.

The *engagement* of Dick and Susan protracted itself and after two years the couple began to take their intermediate state almost for granted. Mrs. Baumann would mention proudly to her friends that Susan *practically* lived with them. It was by no means

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unusual for Susan to spend every week-day evening at the Baumann home. Dick would read the sport pages, while his mother interrupted his perusal from time to time, demanding that he admire the profile of his fiancée, who would be sewing. Susan was indeed very good-looking, and her business prospered exceedingly, while Dick went from one job to another, wholly unperturbed by the fact that a girl was waiting for him, a fact to which his mother sometimes summoned his attention.

Finally Mrs. Baumann arranged that the marriage should occur at the outset of one of Dick's business ventures, as if she were afraid to await the outcome. This new business was a small jewelry store in downtown New York near Wall Street, the capital being provided by Mr. Baumann. Within eight months, Dick had to give up the business in order to avoid bankruptcy, and Susan had to go back to work as an assistant in a beauty parlor, a humiliation which disillusioned her with regard to her mother-in-law *once and for all.* The two never again managed to get along very well together, despite Mrs. Baumann's imperturbable admiration for her daughter-in-law. Mrs. Baumann's could not understand her son's inability to make a living and provide for his wife. No one failed to be delighted by his charm and his intelligence; and he always seemed to acquire a great deal of information about whatever business he was engaged in; but somehow he could not be successful nor make anything *pay*.

After his marriage, Dick was as much a habituée of his parents' household as before, for he and his bride had taken an apartment nearby in order to please Mrs. Baumann. And when it was necessary for Susan to go back to work again, it became convenient for the young married couple to have dinner every night with the whole Baumann family, a course which Susan came to resent more and more, though she was of a divided heart, for she often enjoyed the atmosphere of the family circle as much as before her marriage. One topic prevailed above all others in that household, the wonders of America. This was a subject which many of the foreign-born—for example, Belmont's grandmother,—loved to discuss; but in the Baumann household it was discussed with a scope, intensity, subtlety, and appreciative gusto such as could seldom have been equalled elsewhere. This was partly because Mr. Baumann was very much interested in science and partly because he was so

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pleased with America. When the first plane flight was made, when apartment houses with elevators became common, when the new subway was built, someone or other in the Baumann household would mention the event, looking up from the newspaper where it was stated, and saying: "You see: America!" When the toilet-bowl flushed like Niagara, when a suburban homeowner killed his whole family, and when a Jew was made a member of President Theodore Roosevelt's cabinet, the comment was: "America! America!" The expectations of these people who had come in their youth to the brave new world had not been fulfilled in the least. They had expected to be rich, above all, and they had had a very different image of what their new life would be. But something else had happened to their expectations. They had been amazed to the point where they saw that their imaginations were inadequate to the immense developments which were occurring in the world of their time. They expected, of course, that all the wonders would continue and multiply, and Mr. Baumann had the weird idea that his grandchildren would come home from business by a means of transportation which resembled the cash carriers which flew in tubes from place to place in the department stores. Mrs. Baumann's conceptions of the future were of a less mechanical-scientific character. She dreamed that her sons would be millionaires and her grandsons rabbis and philosophers.

The youngest child, Sidney, had arrived at the age where it was expected that he too should make a living for himself. But the disappointments occasioned by Dick's career were as nothing to the difficulties which Sidney created. The older son had been an indifferent student. Sidney, however, flatly refused to continue school at all after a certain time, and he displayed an unheard-of finickiness with regard to the jobs which were obtained for him through Mr. Baumann's many friends. He left one job as a shipping clerk because he did not like *the class* of people with whom he had to work. He refused to take jobs during July and August on the basis of the ill-effects of working during the summer heat, a reason with which he had been fortified by the countless family discussions of health and food and exercise. His mother always defended and humored him, saying that his health was delicate; but Sidney usually made his father furious and sometimes almost insanely angry. Mrs. Baumann would point out that Sidney was to

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be admired, after all, for his sensitivity to the finer things of life. Mr. Baumann, however, became very much concerned because this was the second example of impracticality in his children. When angered, he blamed this lack on his wife and his wife's family, but came to Belmont's father to discuss the matter with him, the two having been long ago reconciled.

"I'll tell you what to do," said Belmont's father, "but you won't do it. Ship Sidney out into the world. Make him stand on his own two feet. As long as he has a home to come to, and a mother to give him something to eat, and a lot of company in the house from morning to night, he's not going to worry about losing a job."

"But if a boy does not have ambition, is that enough?" Mr. Baumann replied, "I always say, it all depends on the individual. His home has nothing to do with it. It is always the character of the person that counts."

"Sure it depends on character," Belmont's father argued, "but he only finds out that he has to make his own way in the world when he has no home to come back to and no one to give him cigarette money. Why, if I were your son," said Belmont's father, flattered by being asked his advice and wishing to return the compliment, "I would quit work myself and just sit around and enjoy the pleasant evenings."

This advice was taken a year later. Sidney was sent to Chicago to be on his own, although not without first being given the names of numerous relatives and friends of the family in Chicago. In three months he had returned, having exhausted his funds and quarreled with his boss over working hours. He was received back in the bosom of his family with great joy, and though Mr. Baumann grumbled, and Martha addressed habitual ironic remarks to her brother as *a captain of industry*, no one had failed to feel his absence keenly and to be pleased deeply by his return. "Well: you can try in New York as well as Chicago," said Mr. Baumann. "A smart boy like you is bound to get started sooner or later." Mrs. Baumann believed that he would one day fall in love and that would be the turning point. Either, that is, he would find a rich girl attracted by his indubitably fine personality; or he would meet some poor girl and his desire to marry her would be the needed spur to ambition. In America, people were always or almost

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always successful. Mrs. Baumann had seen too many ignorant and poorly brought-up fools make out very well to believe otherwise.

By this time Belmont's mind had been so much absorbed by all that he had heard from his voluble mother through this long morning, that he began to remember all the occasions in which he had, in one way or another, heard about, seen, and talked with the members of the Baumann family. He had been born during his father's partnership with Mr. Baumann (that was the reason for the silver spoon they had given him) and the chief occasions of the Weiss family life, weddings, funerals, *affairs,* had always been marked by the presence of the Baumanns. For each fact which Belmont's mother afforded him, his own mind spontaneously contributed another one. From time to time he would interrupt his mother and remind her of what he remembered. Then the flow of her conversation would seize upon his suggestion and move in the new direction with renewed vigor and fullness of detail.

Some time before Sidney's trip to Chicago, Martha had suffered a brief and successfully overcome attack of spinal meningitis, which left her, however, with a curvature of the spine which made it unlikely that she would ever be able to have children. Martha concluded that this lack, together with her plainness of appearance (which disappeared in her natural vivacity and wit) would prevent her from getting a husband and leave her one of the accursed species of *old maids,* the greatest shame which could occur to a girl from the point of view of any Jewish mother. Her belief that she would not be able to get married heightened Martha's daring wit and *nerve.* She was the one who continued her father's intellectual interests. As he upon occasion would cite the authors he had read in Russia as a young man, Pushkin, Tolstoy, Lermontov; so she was very much taken up with Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells, and spoke with bitter passion about woman's suffrage. And then, to everyone's one amazement, a young doctor who had frequented the household, a very shy fellow who was already quite successful, and who had, moreover, a big family of his own to support, asked Martha to marry him, afraid above all that she would launch out at him with her famous sharpness and scorn. When she told him that he would have to go through life without children, he replied with a fine simplicity that he loved

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her and expected her to make a home for him which would be like her mother's household.

Their marriage was the greatest satisfaction of the Baumanns' life, although it did not compensate for the inability of the two sons to support themselves. Mrs. Baumann tirelessly praised her son-in-law, never ceased to marvel at his magnanimity in marrying a girl who could not bear him children, and took especial pride in the fact that he was so good a doctor, a fact which not only impressed all other women of her acquaintance, whose hope was so often for a son or son-in-law who was a doctor, but also was linked with her passionate interest in everything that had to do with health.

Martha's harshness and sharpness were merely increased by her marriage, and she was especially relentless with her brothers, while her husband, Maurice, stood by, gently protesting because she had again called both of them failures. Maurice had an admiration for the arts from which he gained the usual independence of business values. He would try to argue with Martha that she was being very conventional in this respect and accepting conventional notions of success. With her brutality of tongue, Martha would assert that there was one thing at which the Baumanns were wonderfully successful, and that was marriage. They made excellent marriages. In saying this, she referred not only to her own husband's prosperity and generosity, but also to Susan, who had started her own beauty shop once more and for a number of years supported her husband and herself and also provided him with the capital for each new enterprise to which he was spurred by his mother's anguish at the whole situation. Martha's impatience with her family increased yearly and she wished to see less and less of her family, but her husband soothed the hurt feelings of the parents and gently insisted on paying the weekly visit, although the couple had moved to a well-to-do suburb on Long Island.

America! America! The expression began to recur in Belmont's mind, like a phrase of a piece of music which he had heard too often the day before. He was moved, and his mother was also, in her own way, by the fact that Martha, the family rebel, the one who had freed herself from the family circle, should have been the one to make out well with her life. It seemed to Belmont's mother (and this perception amazed him) that the two sons were

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unsuccessful just because they were so much like their father, who had, however, been successful enough, from every point of view. The sons had taken over the father's attitudes and way of life wholly; but for some reason which was not clear, it no longer worked.

Belmont remembered now the last visit of Mrs. Baumann to his mother just a month before he had left for Paris. It was an afternoon in late fall; Belmont was working very hard in his room and the sounds at the door which indicated visitors annoyed him because he knew he would have to stop work and come from his room in his shirt-sleeves and abstracted look to greet his mother's friends. Mrs. Baumann had come with a woman of her own age, and when he came into the living room, Mrs. Baumann, whose volubility was only equalled by his mother's, told him in a rush the story of her friendship with this woman. They had come to America together in the year 1888 as young girls. They had met on shipboard and this made them *shipsisters*. But although their friendship had continued in a mild way for some years, one day at a picnic of their old country's society, a sudden storm had come to disturb the fine summer Sunday, everyone had run for cover, and they had not seen each other again for the next nineteen years. For that was in 1911 and it was now 1930. The two old women, Mrs. Baumann and her shipsister, continued drinking their tea, and telling the young musician of their feelings in regard to what had come of their lives, and Belmont, suddenly tired and relaxed because he had stopped working, listened and drank tea also. Mrs. Bauman told him that in her sixty-five years of life she had known perhaps as many as a thousand people well, and when she tried to sleep at night, all those faces came back to her so clearly that she believed she could draw their pictures if she were an artist. She was sickened and horrified by this plenitude of memory, although it was not wholly clear why she should have been utterly appalled by the past. And the result was that she could not sleep at night and nothing was more pleasant than the sound of the milkman's wagon which indicated that the darkness would soon be at an end, and she could get up and make breakfast for her family. She told Belmont that sometimes she thought she ought to go to see a psychoanalyst like Freud, a reference he could not at first understand because she pronounced the name to rhyme with food. Her companion offered

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advice at this juncture and said that she believed that everyone ought to have a hobby; her hobby was knitting and it seemed to her that if she did not have her knitting to do in the morning, she would certainly *go crazy*. From his mother, Belmont learned later that this woman's daughter had married a *Gentile* and the result was that she was allowed to visit her only child only upon carefully arranged monthly dates when the husband had been asked to absent himself by his wife. Her one longing, and one which would not, she knew, be satisfied, was to go back to the old country for a visit; she thought of Belmont's imminent journey in terms of her own desire to return and advised him to visit the Roumania from which she had come as a young girl. Listening to the two old women, Belmont tried to call images to his mind of their trip to the new world, their arrival at Ellis Island, and their first impressions of New York City. But he could not; there was nothing in his own experience which he could feel as comparable to that great displacement of the body and the spirit which their coming to America must have been.

Belmont's mother had almost finished ironing her wash, but she was far from done with her story. There was no attribute of the family which she was not capable of illustrating with any number of examples, and each example itself provoked fresh memories and new ideas about these people she had known for thirty years. What she said bloomed in Belmont's mind into shapes which would have astonished and angered her; her words descended into the marine world of his mind and were transformed there as the swimmers and divers seen in the movie, moving underwater through new pressures and compulsions, bubbling, and raising heavy arms to free themselves from the dim and dusky green weight of the water.

Belmont's mother had arrived at the 'twenties, by which time the most bitter animosity had come to exist between Mr. Baumann and his son, Sidney. Whenever Sidney was criticized by his father for his indolence, lack of initiative, and inability to keep any job, he would point out to his father the fact that many of his father's friends had made or were making fortunes. Few of them had the bearing and personality of Mr. Baumann, but they were able to give their sons a start in life. Sidney was an avid reader of newspapers, like his mother, and he had acquired a host of examples of immigrants who had become millionaires; the whole movie indus-

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try constituted, for Sidney, a standing example of his father's ineptitude. It was true that it was unfair to go beyond the family's circle of friends in order to make such comparisons; but Sidney was merciless when criticized. Mr. Baumann was left helpless by Sidney's attack. He felt that there was something wrong not only with the contrast which was made by his son, but also with the repeated assertion that his life had not been successful. He himself was satisfied. He had always provided for his wife and his children and kept them in comfort. It was true that he did not work very hard, but that was unnecessary, since he had an income from the commissions of insurance policies he had written for thirty years, when the premiums were paid or when the policy was renewed. Sidney, however, brushed aside these answers as obvious admissions of weakness. He pointed out that other sons of their class of people had a ten dollar bill to spend on a girl on a Saturday night, but he did not. The more unsuccessful he was, the more outrageous became his verbal assault upon his father for not being a millionaire. Usually, it is true, he was provoked to these attacks by the attempts to get him to work by insulting him and bringing forward as examples other young men of his age who were doing very well, and who as a matter of fact, would soon be wealthy men in their own right, although they came from households and had parents who were really *common.*

After Belmont's father had left his mother early in the 'twenties, the Baumanns and Belmont's mother became better friends than ever. Mrs. Baumann and Belmont's mother would often discuss the fate of the Baumann children during frequent visits, although their friendship was somewhat handicapped by the fact that Mrs. Baumann was twenty years older than Mrs. Weiss. Belmont's mother remembered now that she had once given Mrs. Baumann some advice which she still regarded as very good. She had told her friend that the salvation of the family would have been to go into the summer hotel business, as they had once come very near doing. No one, Belmont's mother had said and now reiterated, would have been better equipped for that business than the Baumanns.

When his mother said such things, Belmont suffered from the illusion, for the moment at any rate, that she had a greater understanding than he did of most of the difficulties of life. And it

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seemed to him at such times that the ignorance he took for granted in her was a sign of his own ignorance. Her understanding simply worked in different, less theoretical terms than his. She had clearly seen, he was sure, the necessity of a relationship he was always meeting in music, the necessity that the individual musician find the medium suitable to his own special gifts. One could hardly doubt that the summer hotel would have been the proper medium for the undeniable gifts of the Baumanns.

What Mrs. Baumann could not understand at all and discussed most often with Belmont's mother was the paradox that her sons, who had a much better bringing-up than other young men of her circle and class, had made out so poorly in comparison with them. She wished to know where the responsibility lay and the headstart she attributed to her children made matters even more perplexing. She was worried about her husband's accusation that it was her own humoring and *babying* and *indulging* of the two boys which had made them lacking in self-reliance and initiative and ambition. Mr. Baumann remembered the advice given him by Belmont's father, that the children would be more ambitious if they had no home to come to, and distorted it into this explanation which blamed Mrs. Baumann for pampering her sons. Mrs. Baumann would present the problem to Belmont's mother again and again, anxious to be told that on the contrary she had always been a wonderful mother. Belmont's mother was always ready to blame someone for everything that happened, but she had a vaguely general interest in the matter which left her free of her usual prepossessions. She observed that one trouble was that the Baumann sons were not willing to go from door to door, for the sake of getting some business; they had not been brought up to expect *hard knocks* and unfriendliness, and it was precisely here that boys who had been brought up in meaner families had the advantage over them. It was a strange and sad thing, both women agreed, that a certain refinement—nothing like the Four Hundred, you understand,—but merely a simple taste for the usual good things of life should be a severe and even a fatal handicap. But worst of all, Mrs. Weiss would say, the greatest handicap of all had been their fine home and family surroundings which had weakened the boys for a career in a world where you had to fight for everything you wanted and you had to fight to keep whatever you had. Belmont's mother would

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say to Mrs. Baumann that this was a *cut-rate, cut-throat world* (an expression as popular with her as: *dog eat dog*), and the best way to be prepared for such a world, as her own experience had shown her, was to be born into a family of thirteen children in which there was never enough for everyone to eat.

After 1929, when all the people who had been so successful, lost so much, Sidney achieved new heights of scorn. There had been times before 1929 when he had been contemptuous of *the system,* but now that no one was able to make out well, he took the country-wide depression as a personal vindication. Every banker or broker who had been caught in some kind of dishonesty was one more instance to Sidney of his own integrity. He would say that if he had been prepared to do the things they had done, he too might have been as successful as they. But now Mr. Baumann was unable to support an idle son very well. With the hard times, many people had abandoned their insurance, or, what was worse, borrowed on it. The father's difficulties and the son's arrogance made the quarrels between them of a desperate character. Mr. Baumann had been dressing to pay a visit one Saturday night and he had been unable to find the pair of shoes he wanted. He was as always concerned about how he was going to be dressed and he became very irritated about not being able to find his shoes. He came into his son's bedroom to ask him if he had seen the shoes, and Sidney, outstretched upon his bed reading and smoking, had been annoyed at the interruption and had told him that he ought not to be so concerned about such a cheap pair of shoes. The shoes were not cheap, in any case, and this characteristic judgment of his taste by his son, who used canons derived from his jobs at Christmas in clothing stores patronized by the rich, infuriated Mr. Baumann. He struck Sidney and only the screaming entrance of Mrs. Baumann prevented the continuance of a fist fight. The next day Sidney had a black eye which he vainly tried to hide with powder. It was a Sunday and the Baumanns were going for a visit. Sidney wished to go along, being incapable of enduring any solitude at any time and having nowhere to go that afternoon. But he was reminded of his black eye by his mother and his father added that he had no clothes, particularly no shoes, suitable for the people they were going to visit. When the Baumanns returned late in the evening they found an emergency wagon and the police in front of the apartment house. Sidney had

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attempted to kill himself by turning on the gas in the kitchen; there had been an explosion and he had not even been seriously injured. Sidney was taken to Bellevue and kept there for a number of months. When his mother visited him, he told her that it was his father, *she should remember*, who had driven him to insanity. Mr. Baumann, when told of this, retaliated by saying that his son had not been able to be anything but a failure even at suicide, and he told everybody that at the asylum Sidney could not be persuaded to engage in the forms of occupational therapy; it seemed an epitome to him that even in the insane asylum, his son should refuse to do anything *remotely resembling work.* Nothing could make Mr. Baumann forget what Sidney had said to him during the early years of the depression when Mr. Baumann's income was sharply curtailed. He had told his father that *the old oil* no longer worked, and when his father had asked him, *what oil, what is this oil?*, the son had said, *banana oil!* laughing with his whole body at his own witticism and then going on to explain to his father that he could no longer expect to persuade anyone that insurance was anything but *a gyp* by the old methods of striking up a friendship and paying long visits and acting like a sage of the neighborhood.

Sidney remained under observation. Dick had for some years assisted his wife in her thriving beauty parlor. He had a child now, a grandchild of whom Mrs. Baumann made much, until she was forbidden to see the child more than twice a week by her daughter-in-law. Martha and her husband prospered more than the rest of the family combined; for the practice of medicine was not so closely attached to the prosperity of the rest of the world as was such a business as insurance. Martha, after an operation and much nervousness, had also had a child. Both grandchildren were daughters, which was disappointing, but which was, at any rate, an indication that not all disappointments resulted from financial matters. (Dick would often say that *money was not everything.*)

The whole family was ashamed of Sidney's *smash-up,* as Dick called it, but this did not keep them from discussing the whole matter with all their many friends. Mr. Baumann at seventy was still able to eke out a living for his wife and himself. But he was a disappointed and a disillusioned man. He blamed everything on the individual, on the lack of *will-power* on the part of his sons. Mrs. Baumann, however, would say to Belmont's mother that *you see*:

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this is what we came to America for forty-five years ago, for this.

Belmont was tired of his mother's story and tired of having remained seated in one place for three hours. He was sick and tired of the mood in which he had heard the story, the irony and contempt with which he had listened for the most part. He had listened from such a distance that what he saw was an outline and thus a caricature. How different the picture would be if he had been able to see those lives from the inside, looking out.

His mother asked him whether he wanted his lunch now, and he told her that he would go for a walk first. But instead he went into the bedroom he was sharing for a time with his older brother and sat down in the armchair by the window, trying to free himself of the conflicting emotions which the narrative had created in him. The bedroom window looked out on a back courtyard, which was empty except for a clothesline and one hanging aerial which had been loosened from its place by the wind. His gaze was directly out of the window at nothing at all. He recognized the blindness involved, the self-concern and the revery which always kept him from seeing what surrounded him.

It now seemed to him that he had seen nothing of his connections with all these people. The separation and the alienation from them which he felt keenly at times was actual enough, but co-existed with the immense unity between his own life and the lives of these people. As the air was full of the radio's voices, so it was also full of intimations of the countless habits, activities, desires and memories which united him to the people from whom he had come, not only his own family and not only their friends, but the age in which they had lived and the conditions which had moved them. He had for a long time seen himself as *different*, because he was an artist and because they regarded him as different and because art had no important part in their lives. That was what his separation and his difference amounted to; it was an aspect of the whole context in which he existed as a product of those people and their lives.

The relationship which he now recognized did not seem a pleasant matter to him. He did not feel any allegiance, whatever that could be, to these people; and he certainly did not feel that he would want to spend his time with them, nor did he feel that he would resent any less the fact that they would never *understand* his music. But every quality of the Baumann family which his mother

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had displayed with her sharp tongue he now saw as corresponding to some quality in himself, modified by the change of circumstances, by the fact that he belonged to the third generation. The contemptuous mood which had governed him as he listened and with which he had enveloped everything his mother said was really self-contempt.

His emotion took the new form of a kind of profound uneasiness, for he now began to see himself within the whole context of those lives and from the distant perspective he had adopted all morning. Looked at from that perspective, his own life, past and present, invited the same irony. He turned his mind deliberately from this prospect, as from the memory of an occasion of great embarrassment, of gaucheness and lack of tact. The impression was pathetic. It made actual the curious omniscience one gains in looking at an old photograph in which the posing faces and the old-fashioned clothes and the moment itself seem ridiculous, ignorant, and wholly unaware of the period quality, which is actually there, and the subsequent revelation of failure and waste. Lifting one's gaze from the photograph, it might occur to one to recognize that the very moment of looking has or will have, in its time, the same character. As he thought of this limitation of vision, Belmont kept himself from looking at it too closely, though he promised himself that he would do so later. When Belmont's mother had concluded by saying that it was a peculiar but assured fact that many people seem to be ruined by their finest qualities, Belmont had been shocked, for her observation became a generalization about the usual fate of human beings, and his own fate. He saw the sources of his being in these lives and the fact presented him with a kind of incipient terror, such as he could feel at any moment if he imagined himself hanging by his hands from the window-ledge of their fifth-floor apartment. And now it seemed to him that all those lives inhabited the air he breathed and would be present wherever he was. Their America would always be present in him.

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Theatre Chronicle

An Innocent on Broadway

WILLIAM SAROYAN has been in the writing business for eight years. He still retains his innocence. It is as valuable to him as an artist as virginity to Deanna Durbin. To keep it, he has, of course, had to follow a strict regimen—no late hours, no worries, and only a limited responsibility. That is, he has had to fight off Ideas, Movements, Sex, and Commercialism. Some of the benefits have been remarkable. He has stayed out of the literary rackets—the Hollywood racket, the New York cocktail-party racket, and the Stalinist racket, which became practically indistinguishable from both the others. What is more important, the well of inspiration, located somewhere in his early adolescence, has never run dry. He is still able to look at the world with the eyes of a sensitive newsboy, and to see it eternally brand-new and touched with wonder. The price is that the boundaries of this world are the boundaries of the newsboy's field of vision.

Saroyan is genuine, Saroyan is not mechanical, Saroyan is the real thing; he tells you this over and over again in the prefaces to his two plays. It is true. If you compare him with his contemporaries, Odets and Steinbeck, the purity of his work is blinding. Puerile and arrogant and sentimental as he may be, he is never cheap. Both Odets and Steinbeck are offering the public a counterfeit literature: Odets is giving an imitation of a lacerated Bronx boy named Odets who once wrote a play; Steinbeck is giving an imitation of a serious novelist. Saroyan as a public figure does an impersonation of Saroyan, but as a writer he plays straight. Moreover, both Odets and Steinbeck suffer from a kind of auto-intoxication; they are continually plagiarizing themselves; and their frequent ascents into "fine writing" are punctuated with pauses for applause that are nearly audible. Now Saroyan, as I say, has created a public character for himself, and the chief attribute of this character is exhibitionism, but he has incorporated this character boldly into his work and let him play his role there. Vanity has become objectified and externalized; it has no need to ooze surreptitiously into the prose. Saroyan's writing remains fresh and crisp and never has the look of having been pawed over by the author. Furthermore, though Saroyan's work is all of a piece, and the same themes and symbols recur, you will rarely find a constellation of symbols repeating itself, you will rarely get the same effect warmed up for a second serving.

It may be that Saroyan's world of ice-cream cones and toys, of bicycles and bugles, and somersaults and shotguns, of hunger and of banquets that

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appear out of the air, of headlines that tell of distant disasters, of good-hearted grocers and lovable frauds, of drunk fairy princes and pinball games that pay, is naturally more at home in the theater than in fiction. Or it may be that, his scope being necessarily as narrow as it is, he has exhausted the permutations of the short story and requires the challenge of a new medium. At any rate, he has written these two plays*; one caused a furore and the other is a hit.

"My Heart's in the Highlands," produced by the Group Theater on a geometric set, was the source of some distress to the New York critics, who had been getting acquainted with "fantasy" and "the poetic drama" through the agency of Maxwell Anderson. The meaning is in the title, "My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here, My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer." It is a story of poor people and their hunger for poetry and music and theater, which persists in the teeth of want, but can only be partly satisfied because society will not pay for these things. There are three principal characters, a poet and his son, and a fugitive from the Old People's Home, an ancient Shakespearean actor who plays the bugle. The critics talked about "experimental theater" and "surrealism," but neither of these terms was quite satisfactory, even to the critics themselves. Actually, the play is half a pastoral and half a vaudeville. In "The Time of Your Life," which was produced this year by Eddie Dowling on a realistic set, the pastoral element has dropped out, and what is left is almost pure vaudeville, a play that is closer to "Hellzapoppin" than to anything else in the theater.

The action of this play takes place in a San Francisco waterfront saloon in the year 1939. Again there is a group of relatively simple people, a pure-hearted prostitute, a boy out of a job, a pinball enthusiast, a nice cop, a nice longshoreman, a negro piano-player, a hoofer, a mad old trapper, the proprietor of the saloon, a nurse, and a stiff young man who is desperately in love with her. All these characters seem to be trailing clouds of glory; they are beautiful and terrible just because they *are* people, Saroyan thinks. Each of them wants to do his own job, to do it tenderly, reverently, and joyfully, and to live at peace with his neighbors. Unfortunately, there are Frustrators at work, monstrous abstractions like Morality, and Labor and Capital, whose object is to flatten out these assertive individualities. The chief of these Frustrators is a Vice-Squad man named Blick, who stands for Morality, but Finance Capital is in the room in the shape of a gentleman slummer, and the voice of Labor can be heard outside in the waterfront strike. But if this universe has its devil in Blick, it has its God in Joe, the character played by Eddie Dowling, a charming, indolent alcoholic, whose mysterious wealth is the life-blood of the joint. Buying champagne, buying newspapers, ordering drinks for the house, giving handouts to the Salvation Army, to the boy out of a job, to the unfortunate prostitute, he keeps the people of the play going, but, being detached from the life of action, he is powerless to save them from

*_My Heart's in the Highlands_, William Saroyan. Harcourt Brace, $2.00.
The Time of Your Life, William Saroyan. Harcourt Brace, $2.50.

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Blick. This is left for one of their own number, the old trapper (Jesus Christ?), who shoots the interfering moralist as calmly as if he did it every day, and regretfully throws his beautiful pearl-handed revolver into San Francisco Bay. When Joe sees that everything is straightened out, and that the two main characters are ready to start life on their own, he goes home, and the understanding is that he will not be back tomorrow.

There is no point in commenting on this intellectual structure, for it is not an intellectual structure at all, but a kind of finger-exercise in philosophy. Whenever it makes itself explicit, its juvenility is embarrassing; when it is allowed to lie somewhere behind the lines, it gives the play a certain strangeness, another dimension that is sensed but not seen. The real living elements of the play, however, owe nothing to philosophy; they stem straight from the Keith Circuit. Saroyan is still drawing on the street-life of his adolescence; it is inevitable, therefore, that his plays should belong to the theater of that street-life, that is, to vaudeville. "The Time of Your Life" is full of vaudeville; indeed, almost every incident and character in it can be translated back into one of the old time-acts. Kit Carson, the trapper, is W. C. Fields; the pinball machine that plays "America" and waves a flag when the jackpot is hit is out of Joe Cook; the toys Joe buys are a visual reminder of the juggling turn, and his money, deriving from nowhere and ostentatiously displayed, makes you think of the magic act; the young man who keeps telephoning his girl is the comic monologist; Harry the hoofer is Jimmy Durante; the boy out of a job is the stooge; and Joe (or God), as played by Eddie Dowling, who is himself an ex-hoofer, has that slim, weary, sardonic, city-slicker look that was the very essence of the vaudeville artist. Even the serious part of the play, the soul-searing drama involving Kitty, the beautiful prostitute, and the boy who wants to marry her, and Blick, takes you back to those short problem melodramas starring a passée actress that were occasionally interspersed with the regular acts. And "The Time of Your Life," like an evening of vaudeville, is good when it engages the fancy and bad when it engages the feelings. "My Heart's in the Highlands" was a slightly different case. The sentiment there was a little cloying but not false. It proceeded from a different and more untainted source, the folk-tale or pastoral that was also a part of Saroyan's Armenian-American boyhood.

Saroyan is in love with America, and very insistent about it. Just as a girl in his plays will be an ordinary girl and at the same time "the most beautiful girl in the world," because Saroyan is young and feeling good when he looks at her, so America is an ordinary place and at the same time "the most wonderful country in the world." This excessive, rather bumptious patriotism has created a certain amount of alarm; it has been suspected that Saroyan has joined the propagandists of the second crusade for democracy. The alarm is, I think, unjustified. Actually, the second statement is no more realistic than the first; it is not the literal fact but the state of mind that the reader is asked to believe in. And there is a kind

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of pathos about both statements that arises from the discrepancy that must exist between the thing described and the description of it. How far, in the second case, the pathos is intentional it is impossible to tell, but the contrasts in Saroyan's work show that he is at least partly aware of it.

In each of these plays there is a character that, more than the "gentle people" he talks so much about, represents the America he loves. This national type, exemplified in the bugler in "My Heart's in the Highlands," and in the trapper in "The Time of Your Life," is an elderly boaster who is both a fraud and not a fraud, an impostor and a kind of saint. In "My Heart's in the Highlands" the bugler, with all his pretensions, is just a fugitive from the Old People's Home; yet, from the point of view of the people in the play, he is everything he purports to be, and more; he is the light-bringer. The same thing is true of the trapper in the second play, but the point is better made. Beginning with "Did you ever fall in love with a midget weighing thirty-nine pounds?" Kit Carson moves along through the plot telling one tall tale after another. At the end, after he has shot Blick offstage, he comes into the saloon and begins a narrative that sounds exactly like all the others: "Shot a man once. In San Francisco. In 1939, I think it was. In October. Fellow named Blick or Glick or something like that." This statement is a bombshell. It gives veracity to all the improbable stories that have preceded it, and at the same time the improbable stories cast doubt on the veracity of this statement, which the audience nevertheless knows to be true. Finally, it demonstrates the man's essential humility.

This kind of character undoubtedly belongs to the tradition of American life and especially to the tradition of the West. It is Paul Bunyan and it is also the barker. But the tradition is dead now; it died when the frontier closed on the West Coast at some point in Saroyan's childhood. The type, if it exists at all outside of W. C. Fields, is now superannuated, for such anomalous human beings could only thrive under nomadic conditions of life. Today the barker has become an invisible radio-announcer, and the genial, fraudulent, patent-medicine man has turned into a Coster-Musica, a respectable suburban swindler. The America Saroyan loves is America-Was-Promises, and the plays he weaves around it are not so much daring innovations as legends.

MARY MCCARTHY

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The Cultural Front

James T. Farrell

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN, in a recent letter to *The New Republic*, proposed that those intellectuals who had been anti-Stalinist prior to the signing of the Stalin-Hitler pact form a united front with those who have disavowed their support of the Kremlin after that pact had been signed. Replying to objections of mine, Chamberlain offered two reasons to support such a plan: first, Stalinism is a dead horse; second, men like Ralph Bates and others should not be penalized because they happened to change their minds later than others.

I should like to present a number of reflections brought to mind by Chamberlain's proposal.

The notion that Stalinism is dead is not supported by the facts. The reason why many have underestimated the staying power of Stalinism is that they have, apparently, not clearly perceived what is the real source of strength in Stalinism. The strength of Joseph Stalin, and of his movement in the western world, never depended, in any fundamental sense, upon such men as Vincent Sheean, Louis Fischer, Ralph Bates, Malcolm Cowley, Granville Hicks and others. These men did not influence Stalinism in any noticeable degree. Stalinism influenced and used them. They accommodated their ideas to Stalinism. Now, when for reasons which have not been made clear, a number of the fellow travellers have jumped off the band wagon, some people have been led to assume that Stalinism is dead. I repeat, Stalin never really depended on these men. In fact, he has shot much better men than Louis Fischer, Vincent Sheean, Malcolm Cowley, Granville Hicks, Ralph Bates, and Dr. Frederick L. Schuman. And Stalinism did not perish as a result of such murders.

When Stalin changed his line, and adopted a German orientation, it became necessary to run much water out of the western branches of the Kremlin. The Popular Front was built up on the premise of a war alliance between Russia and the western powers against Germany. Those intellectuals who became Stalinist supporters on the basis of this premise could not be of great use to Stalin in the new period. They would have had to turn too many somersaults. Furthermore, journalists and professors who have made it their business to fight Fascism, and who have built up a large audience and a reputation on this fight, found themselves in difficulties. Although these men supported the party line in one way or another, they did not write for a party audience. And they would have had great diffi-

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culties facing their lecture audiences, and writing for the general public had they gone on defending the party line and apologizing for Stalin after he joined with Hitler. Vincent Sheean tried it by defending the pact over the radio and in *New Masses:* he laughed at those who predicted that Stalin would invade Poland. The ink was scarcely dry on his article when the Red Army marched.

When I have discussed the conduct of these men in disavowing their Stalinist past, the question of their sincerity has been raised. This is a question which is not publicly verifiable. As Lenin once remarked, no one has as yet invented a sincereometer. But regardless of their personal motivations, there were objective reasons why many of the fellow travellers went off the reservation. It was good for their careers. And the present Stalinist policies of disbanding old organizations, and establishing new ones with different stooge names, indicates that the Stalinist movement realized the necessity of changing the window display. Furthermore, it is difficult to consider the conduct of these men either noble or laudable. It required a historic earthquake to awaken their moral sensibilities. The murders of Stalin, the Stalinist methods of slander and character assassination, the role of Stalinism in the Spanish Civil War, the evidences of the totalitarian character of the Stalinist movement which no one could fail to perceive—all these failed to stir them.

No, neither the pens nor the minds of the renegade fellow travellers explain the source of Stalin's strength. Stalin is powerful because he rules the Soviet Union. The source of Stalin's strength is the U.S.S.R. On the basis of his strength, Stalin has built up organizations all over the world. The organizing ability of Stalinism is amazing, and behind it, there are tremendous resources. Furthermore, the religions of our time are political. Stalinism is a political religion of the present, and backed by tremendous resources. It is not a small and fly-by-night radical organization. It is still a going concern. Stalin, thanks to his power and his resources, is able to remove issues from the realm of public verification, and to place them in that of faith: he has his blind followers.

I have long been an opponent of Stalinism. But I am not in favor of an alliance of intellectuals which is based solely on opposition to Russia. Such an alliance will only play into the hands of our own war mongers. I consider Stalin to be in the Hitler war camp and his policies to be Red Imperialism. But in order to fight one imperialism, I do not want to join another one. I am against both imperialisms.

Stalinism remains a menace to intellectual life and the radical movement. Its opposition to war in this country is, I am convinced, hypocritical: an opposition based on support of one of the warring camps. But with its ability to organize, its technique of confusing issues, and its remaining stooges and fellow travellers, it is now in an excellent position to smear the genuine anti-war movement in this country. And despite desertions, it continues to remain powerful in the cultural field. It still has its League of American Writers, T.A.C. in the theatrical field and the

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American Artists Congress. It is now organizing new fronts. The present is not the first time that the Stalinist movement has disbanded organizations no longer useful to it, and set up new ones in place of them. It remains necessary to protect progressive and radical movements, and cultural and intellectual integrity from the virus of Stalinism. Stalinism is not broken. The reputations of a few of its quondam fellow travellers may be held suspect in some minds. But that is a small matter. After all, what does Joseph Stalin care about Malcolm Cowley?

The reason why these ex-fellow travellers are held suspect is that they have not satisfactorily explained their sudden change of mind. Bates broke after the invasion to "liberate" Finland. But he still upholds the policies of Stalinism in Spain. When recently he reviewed Edward Rolfe's *The Lincoln Brigade* in *The New Republic*, he had a chance to talk about Spain. Rolfe repeats the usual Stalinist slanders about the P.O.U.M. Bates skipped the question. Fischer was in Europe last spring and summer, with rumors of the pact under his nose. He went on sending dispatches to *The Nation*, pointing out that Russia was a bulwark against Fascism. Cowley does not, at present, like Stalin's methods. But he defended the Moscow trials as measures which would preserve cultural freedom. Sheean, after the invasion of Poland, appeared with an analysis of the crimes of Stalin which went all the way back to the fight with the Left Opposition following the death of Lenin. This analysis was very familiar to anyone who had read *Stalin* by Boris Souvarine, and *The Revolution Betrayed* by Leon Trotsky. Sheean was very late in his retroactive discoveries, and he was unable to explain them. In trying to, he declared that until the Polish invasion, he had required more than the usual measure of proof from anyone who criticized Stalin. This is an intellectually shabby explanation.

No, these intellectuals have not assimilated their "mistakes." One seeks in vain for an analytical and principled statement which will reveal why they lacked foresight and then suddenly possessed such remarkable hindsight. One asks why did some of them, such as Vincent Sheean and Max Lerner, in August sign a statement which declared that anyone who compared Russia and Germany as totalitarian states were agents of Fascism. One looks at the spectacle of Granville Hicks with unsuppressed irony. Here was a man who apparently liked the cook, and didn't mind the omelet: he only objected to the plate on which it was served. In other words, he objected to the publicity methods of his comrades in trying to popularize the pact. As a matter of fact, the only statement of a break which I have read that can be termed principled was one written in *The Socialist Call*, by Richard Rovere, a former editor of *New Masses*.

The question involved in considering the recent writings of these men is not one concerning penalties. It is the following: We find sudden and radical changes in their political orientation. We find them in the autumn and winter writing in flat contradiction to what they wrote in the previous spring and summer. They do not explain these contradictions. Further, we note that they were wrong, ridiculously wrong, in the forecasts they made

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in the fields in which they are considered specialists. One naturally wonders about their competence when, after having been so wrong, they fail to explain themselves. Suddenly, instead of walking on their feet, they seemed to be standing on their heads. There they remain.

When I go to a dentist to have a tooth extracted, and my jaw is broken in the process, I will not return to have more work done by the same man. Similarly, I am not now going to go to men who have already mislead public opinion on the most crucial issues of the day. Regardless of how sincere they may be, their own records throw a weird light on their competence. If they could be taken in for so long by such a patently pernicious movement as Stalinism, I fear that they will be taken in by other movements. Already, in order that the editors of *The Nation*, the *New Republic*, and many of their contributors such as Vincent Sheean, Louis Fischer, Granville Hicks, Dr. Schuman, Dr. Max Lerner and others might be educated politically, it has cost the world a major war. That is a rather high price to pay for their education, particularly when we realize that they have all gone to college, and that some of them have even graduated from Harvard.

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Frederick L. Schuman: A Case History

Frank N. Trager

FREDERICK L. SCHUMAN is the Woodrow Wilson professor of government at Williams College. His career as a Stalinist fellow-traveller is both interesting and typical. For almost a decade he has played tag with the "party-line" and liners. With Vincent Sheean, Ralph Bates, Max Lerner, Louis Fischer and others he has now "dropped off the train."

Just before he got off he made one last desperate effort to hang on; but within a week he hopped sharply. The interested reader might follow his latest course by comparing his article in the *New Republic* for November 29th and his letter in the *New York Times* of December 10th.

The main line of Schuman's article in the November 29th *New Republic* is very simple:

> Soviet foreign policy has always been determined only by its need to defend itself from aggression, the threat of which, since 1933, has come from Germany. Russia, therefore, attempted to ally herself with the democracies against Germany. The Western powers, on the other hand, tried to turn Germany against Russia through their policy of appeasement. However, the USSR showed Hitler, through the purges, that his policy of internal disintegration could not be used against Russia. At the same time, negotiations with England and France broke down because they refused to give Russia necessary military bases in the Balkan and Baltic countries. Russia therefore made her peace with Germany and won from her, as a friend, the control of the Baltics necessary for her protection from Germany, the enemy. The only cost of this brilliant move was "ideological consternation among comrades and sympathizers abroad. The cost is high. But the cost of inaction would have been higher." Furthermore, all this has nothing to do with morality and sentiment. It is simply a question of *realpolitik*, of securing the defense of the Soviet Union. "Under existing circumstances this happens to be neither an ideological nor a moral problem but a military one. The Kremlin, has, thus far at least, solved it brilliantly."

A few days later, after the Red Army had crossed the Finnish border, Professor Schuman wrote a letter to the *Times*. In the *New*

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Republic, he included the "refusal of Helsinki . . . to accept Soviet military protection" as one of Britain's crimes. But in the *Times,* "none of the possible justifications which can be adduced in defense of Soviet policy toward Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania applies to Finland."

In the *New Republic,* he writes, "The test of policy is success in the enhancement of power. To contend that Moscow should have adhered to earlier formulas which London and Paris had rendered sterile is to ignore the dangers of clinging to fictions. . . . To insist that Moscow should not have played power politics is to forget that those who refuse to play become the victims of those who play." But by December 10th, "All of these obligations, (with Finland) which the USSR took the initiative in proposing, are still binding today. . . . All of them have been wantonly swept aside by the USSR in a fashion legally and ethically indistinguishable from the lawless aggressions committed by Japan, Italy and Germany. . . . The USSR has thus joined the forces of international anarchy and criminality."

Schuman in the *Times* could praise Finland for resisting while the other countries gave way under the threat of force. But in the *New Republic* he thought it absurd for liberals to protest against Bolshevik *Machtpolitik.* He suggested that liberals "must run risks of also learning lessons from the Florentine who, four centuries ago, advised Lorenzo how to play power politics," and asserted that the Kremlin should not be indignantly denounced for conduct "merely more successful" than its European competitors.

It is indeed difficult to reconcile these variations in the Williams professor. But they are not really new. His past conduct exhibits similar patterns of ethical indifference one day and hortatory fervor the next, of dogmatic predictions quickly denied by history and replaced not by modesty but by new predictions. The phases of his career are marked by these sudden avowals and disavowals, caused by an apparent conflict between a yearning to enhance his reputation in left-wing circles and the fear of losing it in conservative quarters.

In 1932 Schuman was working closely with radical organizations on several fronts. The high point of his activity at this period was his membership in the League of Professional Groups for Foster and Ford, the presidential candidates of the Communist

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Party. He together with 52 others, signed an open letter calling upon the citizens of the country to vote for the Communist candidates.

In 1935, an investigation of radicalism was held at the University of Chicago at the instigation of trustee Walgreen, who had discovered his niece, a student at the University, reading a book entitled *The Meaning of Marx.* Professor Robert M. Lovett, who had supported Norman Thomas in 1932, and Frederick L. Schuman were the chief targets of the investigation.

Professor Lovett defended his socialist and pacifist position before his senatorial inquisitors to the great satisfaction of students and colleagues, including President Hutchins and the then Dean Slesinger who upheld the right of members of the Faculty to believe, write, and vote as they pleased.

Schuman, called to the stand, flatly denied that he had any ideas which were in any way radical. He maintained that he had never signed the Open Letter, which appealed for support of the Communist candidates in 1932. (Three years had thus elapsed before he saw fit to repudiate a public document carrying his name.) There were those who had seen his signature to the letter, as well as his other letters in one of which he requested additional copies of *Culture and Crisis* issued by the League of Professional Groups for Foster and Ford and which bore his name. When they recovered from the shock, they assumed that the accounts of the investigation were garbled. But when the details of his testimony were made public, there was no room for doubt.

Here are some of the things to which Schuman swore under oath:

> *On Affiliation:* "I am emphatically not a socialist, syndicalist, communist or anarchist. . . . I have never voted for, supported, or knowingly permitted my name to be used in support of any Communist candidate for public office. In 1928 I voted for Alfred E. Smith and in 1932 for Franklin D. Roosevelt."
>
> The letter which he had signed began with the sentence: "We are convinced that both Republican and Democratic parties represent the interests of the moneyed classes, that is, of the big manufacturers, capitalists, and bankers, and not the interest of the people at large." It ended: "We therefore pledge our support in the national elections (1932) to the Communist Party and its candidates, William Z. Foster and James W. Ford, and call upon all educators, writers, engineers, social workers, artists,

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architects and intellectuals in general to join us in this move and form 'Foster and Ford' Committees throughout the country."

Social Views: Mr. Schuman testified: "In my public addresses and publications, I have repeatedly pointed out that liberal and radical critics of our present economic and social order have been short-sighted or dishonest in failing to recognize that extensive governmental interference with profits and property rights can lead only to chaos or to Socialism."

Economic Views: "I have further pointed out that genuine socialism can be achieved only through the Communist strategy of bloody, violent, and destructive social revolution which in a society as highly industrial and as intricately interdependent as our own can lead only to complete social and economic collapse. I have argued at length that honest profits are not only legitimate and desirable but are the source of all prosperity in our economic order."

Educational Views: "Conservative indoctrination and inculcation of Americanism is essential in our educational system, but at some point this must be supplemented by the development of critical thinking." (See verbatim quotations in Chicago papers, May 25, 1935.)

It is not surprising that the State Senate Investigating Committee acting on the maxim 'Sufficient unto the day are the words thereof' gave Schuman a clean bill of health but publicly rebuked Robert M. Lovett as a dangerous character.

One might have expected that this type of double dealing would have finished Schuman. His name was no longer respected among liberal and radical Chicago students and teachers. The Neo-Thomists held him up as an example of cowardice. Even the administration appeared to be disgusted with his performance. It was not long before he quit Chicago for Williams College where he still is. This might have ended Schuman's flirtation with the Left. But the Communist Party line changed and the tactics of the Trojan Horse were adopted, as a result of the 7th Congress of the Communist International, July-August 1935.

To be successful, this "line" required that it be carried by people who would deny that they were members of the Communist Party in order to more effectively support its proposals. Members of this Party were authorized to deny their membership whenever necessary. Prominent individuals were recruited not for the Party but primarily to head its peripheral organizations. The strategy was remarkably successful. It created an ideal situation for Schuman and many others to cooperate with the Stalinists without running the earlier risks.

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His public behavior from this time on conformed to the following pattern: He would disavow political bias or sympathy for Communism and the Communist Party. If a question of general policy arose, he would preface his remarks by saying "I am not a Communist but a liberal." Sometimes he would vary this by saying: "I am neither a Stalinist nor a Trotskyist. I abhor them both. I am simply a liberal and a democrat." He would then go on to a discussion of whatever issue was in question, and invariably plump down for the Communist Party line. The Stalinists could thereupon say, "See, even an honest liberal agrees with us. Why be suspicious about our proposal or conclusion?" This became his technique on all questions ranging from the Moscow Frame-up Trials to Collective Security, from the nature of Russian "democracy" to the Russian invasion of Poland. Sometimes his zeal in supporting the party-line was so excessive that it would embarrass the Stalinists. He came out, for example, for military sanctions to back up the collective security program of the Communist Party at a time when it was soft pedalling this implication of its program. But although there were occasions when he gave the Stalinists cause to question his wisdom, they never questioned his devotion.

Before discussing some of these typical incidents in which Schuman figured, it is necessary to make reference to his theoretical pronouncements during this period. They were designed to prove, as Schuman actually said in the pages of the *New Republic*, that "Underneath their skins Communism and liberalism were blood brothers." In the Autumn 1936 issue of the *Southern Review*, Schuman published an article on "Liberalism and Communism Reconsidered." The jumping-off point is the Webbs' book on Russia; the flight of the argument is controlled by the Communist Party Popular-Front line; the landing point is an emphatic endorsement of Stalin's foreign policy proposals to the Western democracies:

> "The observer who perceives the content and direction of the collective ideas that move societies to action will recognize that the great cleavage between contemporary societies is not between 'capitalism' (democratic or fascist) and 'communism' but between those (whether in Manchester, Moscow, Marseilles, or Minneapolis) who believe in mind and in government of, by, and for the people and those (whether in Munich, Milan or

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Mukden) who believe in government of, by, and for a self-appointed oligarchy of property and privilege."[1]

Schuman applauds the Webbs. He, too, affirms that "bolshevism, at the end of its second decade, is building a great community *not less* democratic in its values and in its *organization* than those of western Europe and America and not less devoted to those values which liberal Western culture has long cherished." (my italics)

Very peculiar, to say the least. Just a year earlier, he had told the Investigating Committee at Chicago he believed "that extensive governmental interference with profits and property rights can lead only to chaos or to Socialism."

He concludes his essay on the following note: "Moscow has invited the west to join in the common defense against the new barbarians. If liberalism has still at its disposal sufficient imagination and statesmanship to accept the invitation, salvation on the brink of doom is still possible."

In 1936 the Moscow Trials startled the world. Even the "party-line" in countries outside of Russia was slow in catching the full force of the new terrorism. In his essay that year Schuman mentions the first trial but skirts judgment on it. By the following summer, however, the hue and cry against Trotsky and the "old Bolsheviks" by Stalinists and their fellow-travelers was at its height. Schuman joined the pack with another essay in the *Southern Review* (Summer 1937) "Leon Trotsky: Martyr or Renegade?"

Considered from any point of view, this essay marks a new low in American scholarship. It was exposed and refuted point by point by Sidney Hook in the subsequent issue (Autumn) of the *Southern Review*. Here it is necessary only to refer to two things. According to Schuman, Trotsky's guilt is established; and the question in the title of his article is answered with the words that Trotsky emerges "simply as the renegade who failed."

From what, then, is Trotsky a renegade? Schuman tells us in warning liberals away from any attempt to investigate the truth

[1] Alliteration has a fatal attraction for Schuman even if it results in nonsense. "Manchester, Moscow, Marseilles, and Minneapolis" believe in "mind" because it is the only alliterative antonym to the "might" in which Munich, Milan and Mukden believe. I forego any logical analysis of his writings because Schuman seems blissfully innocent of what his words imply. He is interested only in his intent and in political effect. Although according to Schuman the first group of M's believe in "government of, by, and for the people," in the very same essay and in many others, he insists that phrases like these are "bunk," and that the realities of government everywhere *depend upon power, fraud and misleading symbols.* (my italics)

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about him: "Trotskyism today is a program of uncompromising class war, of repudiation of liberal and bourgeois' democracy, of universal revolution. Stalinism today stands for appeasement, for collaboration with liberalism, for order and peace in a world society threatened with destruction by war between classes and war between nations."

If this is Trotskyism, and if, as Schuman insists, this is what Trotsky has always held, in what possible sense can Trotsky be a renegade? Trotsky cannot be a renegade because he has refused to change his principles however one might criticize them despite years of persecution. And this charge is made by none other than the man who denied his signature, denied his principles, denied his actions, denied everything but his identity before a senatorial investigating committee at the University of Chicago!

Schuman might have made a case of Trotsky's adherence to principles from which Stalin deviated. He might have, at various times, pointed out the similarities between Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. This is not what he wanted to do. In some way he wanted to extol Stalin at the expense of his Bolshevik confreres. Perhaps Schuman today is going to justify his attack upon Stalinism because Stalin reverts to what appears to be a Trotskyist position!

In the same article, Schuman on the basis of an admittedly fractional part of the relevant data pronounced Trotsky guilty of the crime as charged. But of the Dewey Commission which closely examined all the available data, Schuman says that "if honest, (it) can only report that the necessary data for a definite judgment are not available." He then adds immediately: "In all likelihood, however, it will report that Trotsky is 'innocent'." Ergo, the Dewey Commission is branded as dishonest even before its findings are made.

It is not necessary to defend the honesty of John Dewey against Frederick L. Schuman. But it is interesting to observe how closely Schuman's slanders paralleled those of Kyle Crichton in the *New Masses* and of the party hacks in the *Daily Worker*.

From this time on, Schuman played closely to the party-line without deviating a hairsbreadth, except for the introductory build-ups necessary to pose as an independent scholar. In books, reviews, articles, he hammered away against radicals who criticized the Stalinist popular-front line. He sneered at Charles Beard who

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urged that the United States could and should remain neutral in any European war (The *Daily Worker* at this time insinuated that Charles Beard was a Japanese agent because he had assisted in the reconstruction of Tokyo, after the earthquake). At a convention of the American Student Union at Vassar in debate with Norman Thomas, he openly advocated a war in defense of the U.S.S.R. (*and* Western Civilization, of course) against Hitlerism. He performed nobly in the pages of the *New Republic.* Malcolm Cowley sent him the books of Stalinist writers for praise and those of anti-Stalinists for slaughter, *e.g.,* Borkenau, Souvarine. In the pages of *Current Events* he continued the same work as an expert on foreign affairs.

Early in 1939 he published *Europe on the Eve,* a study of the crises of diplomacy between 1933-1939. He reaffirmed his belief in Stalin's justice during the Trials—a justice which "conceivably saved Moscow from the fate of Vienna, Madrid and Prague." Nowhere in the long book (573 pp.) is there a suspicion that Stalinist policy contributed to the downfall of Madrid—nor for that matter to the arrival of Hitler. Although he recognizes that the fruits of Stalin's new program "were ephemeral" the "line" from 1934-38 "delayed by a generous margin of years the test of armed combat for the USSR." The men of Moscow were correct in their calculations! (pp. 261-2.)

The ink had hardly dried on the pages of this book before its entire thesis of collective security for the democratic nations and the USSR against Hitlerism was wiped out by Stalin's deal with Hitler and the consequent invasion of Poland, the Baltic countries and Finland.

Together with his colleague at Williams, Max Lerner, he signed the Lamont Open-Letter in which the organizers of the Committee for Cultural Freedom—John Dewey, Ferdinand Lundberg, William Kilpatrick, John Dos Passos and others—were denounced as "Fascists and allies of Fascists" because they had referred to Russia as a totalitarian state.

Then came the Russian invasion of Finland and the consequent indignation of the entire liberal and radical world, the isolation of the Communist Parties, the "getting off the train" by the flocks of fellow-travelers who had subdued every vestige of moral sentiment which may have disturbed them these many years. And Schuman repeated his Chicago trick.

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In the *New York Times* of December 10th he repudiated his previous allegiance without indicating that he had been one of the stoutest defenders of that strange Stalinist faith. He called for American "retaliation" against the USSR because Americans "cannot afford to be 'neutral' in any conflict between order and lawlessness." He reverted to moral exhortation as a cover for his own previously professed unmoralism. Finally, in the *Nation* of January 6, 1940 he forgets what he wrote about "Albion's Perfidy" to remark that England's acts are neither vicious nor virtuous; they arise from geography and business. "America's stake in Britain's war" is to join our fortunes to England's sooner rather than later in order to "reconstruct a liberal world economy." Sententiously he ends his article, "Answers (to matters of policy) found late may be found too late."

Surely there is a moral in this strange career of Professor Schuman. Answers found late may indeed be found too late. A recurring cycle of sin and penance may lead to ultimate grace but in a human world judgment is adversely passed on those who allow the cycle too many turns of the wheel. Even sharper is the condemnation on those who profess innocence in face of demonstrable guilt. The career would not merit so much attention if Professor Schuman and his allies had not occupied such strategic posts during these past years.

Intellectual integrity and scientific method, academic freedom and democracy are ideals which are not well served by espousing one or another varieties of Moscow, Rome or Berlin totalitarianism. Politics may or may not be an amoral discipline, but politicians cannot be free from moral responsibility nor escape moral judgment. Schuman has tried to use the apparatus of scholarship first to persuade others that Stalinism and liberalism were "blood-brothers" leading to a better, that is in some sense, a morally better civilization; but when it suited his purposes he would use the same apparatus to exculpate Stalinism from its sins of commission on the grounds that politics did not involve ethics, that it was to be "judged" by its "success." So crass a formulation of the debased doctrine: ends justify means, presents a sordid spectacle. To this sordidness Schuman has made a major contribution.

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Books

ON IDEAS

Sidney Hook

IDEAS MAY BE APPROACHED in various ways. We may inquire concerning their validity. We may investigate their origins either as events in a man's biography or as forces in social history. We may lay bare the internal articulation of beliefs, neatly ordering them so that the pattern of logic or illogic is apparent beneath the rhetoric. We may investigate the causes of their acceptance or rejection, correlate them with other phases of personality and culture, interpret them as expressions of need and interest.

All of these approaches to ideas are legitimate. But they are not equally relevant to all fields and to all problems in any one field. The history of physical theories does not seem to be as germane to the problems of the natural scientist as the history of economic or legal doctrines to the social scientist. Relevance, of course, is a matter of degree. But the degree can be evaluated only when we have a relatively clear conception of the *problem* to which we want to find an answer. It is this failure to set down the problem which is to be solved or further clarified that is responsible for so much loose thinking about the nature of ideas.

These reflections are suggested by a reading of Max Lerner's *Ideas Are Weapons.** In many ways it is a curious book. Curious in organization, curious in its textual meaning, curious even in the author's intent. What seems to hold these miscellaneous essays and reviews together, composed over a period of eight years and ranging from the Supreme Court to the novels of Dos Passos, is Mr. Lerner's declaration that they exhibit "the inner unity of a cohesive point of view." This point of view is described by the title and amplified in the first chapter: "Ideas are Weapons."

A considered approach to Mr. Lerner's book must at the very least pay some attention to what the author insists is its unifying feature, even if it turns out that his point of view, as in the case of some thinkers he discusses, is neither clear nor consistent, and his purposes different from what he imagines them to be. The more natural approach to these essays, had not Mr. Lerner stressed the importance of the point of view which allegedly unifies them, would be to consider them as occasional pieces, some good, some not, some indifferent, and to make a general appraisal of Mr. Lerner's qualities as a writer rather than as a political thinker.

Mr. Lerner's gifts as a writer are not inconsiderable. These consist primarily of a certain freshness of style which enables him to make even

*Viking Press. $3.50.

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commonplaces crisp and palatable, and a power of sympathetic interpretation, especially valuable in presenting the doctrines of writers who are themselves obscure. His piece on "What Is Usable in Veblen?" is a good illustration of these capacities. He carries the reader to the very heart of the perspectives from which all of Veblen's main ideas radiate. In this way he induces an imaginative comprehension of the whole body of Veblen's thought without which to the ordinary reader Veblen makes dreary reading.

The essay on "Hitler as Thinker" is perhaps a more masterly illustration of interpretative power. The rationale of Hitler's obsessions take form as the intertwined compulsions of his personality, his background and post-war German misery are described. We understand why "the very quality of not making sense is exactly what gives effectiveness" to Mein *Kampf*. Criticism is not spared but its point lies not so much in demonstrating that Hitler's ideas are unintelligent, an easy task, as in making his emotional tensions and thought constructions intelligible. He emerges not as a monster but as a case understood. Our understanding includes the social and cultural traditions in which such a case can establish the norms of apparent sanity.

This represents Lerner's interpretative approach at its best. It also yields some insights whenever he restates the position of thinkers whose writings are fragmentary, like Holmes, or when he discusses literary figures like Dos Passos who develop ideas by indirection. On the other hand, the defects of Lerner as a writer are glaring whenever he is confronted by a position which is clearly stated. He can do nothing with an argument which depends upon explicit assumptions, whose logical implications are developed, and whose validity rests on alleged evidence. In this sense there is no analysis of ideas whatsoever in Lerner's book. He seems equipped to explore almost every aspect of a man's ideas except that which is of the greatest importance for purposes of scientific understanding and action. By approaching ideas intuitively, where they challenge scientific inquiry and analysis, Lerner misstates even the obvious and obfuscates what is already clear. He emotionalizes other people's ideas to a point where their outlines are lost. What might be forgiven in a poet, is a serious lapse in one who would be regarded as a political scientist.

How misleading Lerner's intuitive interpretation of ideas can be is illustrated in his essay on Lenin's *State and Revolution*. Whatever else may be said about this book its argument is clear. This has been recognized by all critics even when they have contested its validity. It remained for Max Lerner to discover, what no one ever had the temerity to suggest during the balmiest days of the Popular Front, that Lenin's *State and Revolution* can also be interpreted as an argument in behalf of a class collaborative variant of the Popular Front. Valid or not, Lenin's argument from first page to last is directed precisely *against* such a view. But according to Lerner, Lenin's book

"contains two divergent lines of direction. . . . One of these strains (!)

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> is the inevitability of a violent revolution. The other is the uniqueness of each national experience, and of the economic development, the political forms, and the revolutionary temper of each. . . . The first leads to austere anti-reformism. . . . The second leads to an emphasis on 'the national question,' on national traditions and temper, and, in Engels' works, on the theme that 'the working-class can only come to power under the form of the democratic republic.' . . . By Lenin's own reasoning . . . revolutions of the majority, such as the Jeffersonian, Jacksonian, and the New Deal revolutions, must in the end, if conducted with courage and skill, make an anti-democratic capitalist coup merely suicidal adventurism."

Again it is not a question here of the truth of Lenin's ideas but their meaning. And it is their meaning which Lerner distorts beyond recognition. *Nowhere* does Lenin counterpose his theory of how state power must be won to the uniqueness of each national experience. He emphasizes distinctions of national experience only to argue that they do not affect the essential validity of the laws of capitalist development, the class struggle, the theory of the state, and in the era of finance capital, the conquest of power. It is not only Lenin's meaning which escapes Lerner but Engels'. The sentence he quotes from Engels is immediately followed by this remark: "This is indeed the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat, as has already been shown by the French Revolution." Had he consulted Engels' own writings instead of contenting himself with Lenin's quotations from Engels, he would have seen that Engels is here criticizing the failure of the German Social-Democrats to strive for a democratic republic, and their belief that such a republic could be achieved in Germany peacefully, not to speak of the further belief that a democratic republic could grow peacefully into socialism.*

Because he is not concerned with the structure of ideas but with imaginative marginalia, Lerner runs together questions which although related must be carefully distinguished. It becomes difficult in consequence to tell exactly what point it is that he is discussing. In the essay on Lenin there are at least four problems that he handles as if they were one: whether the transition to socialism can be achieved peacefully; whether it should be carried out by a mandate of the absolute majority of the population; whether the form of majority rule should be the dictatorship of one class; whether this last involves the dictatorship of one party. On every one of these questions Lenin's views may be wrong; but it is also true that on every one of these questions his views are clear, even when they differ, as in important respects they do, from those of Marx and Engels.

The point of view which unifies these essays, Mr. Lerner tells us, is that "Ideas are weapons." A simple sentence which seems transparent until Mr. Lerner begins to explain what he means by it. It then turns out

Die Neue Zeit, Jhrg 20, Bd. I, (1901-1902), P. 10. Engels goes on, like Marx before him, to make possible exceptions of countries like England. Lenin takes issue with them on this point with arguments of dubious validity, but his position is unambiguous.

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that the terms "ideas" and "weapons," as used by the author, are bewilderingly ambiguous, that his own characterization of the career of ideas is not consistent, and that the point of view, which he refers to as "a Copernican revolution" in ideas, is so confused that it even infects the author's purposes.

In his foreword, Mr. Lerner describes his approach to ideas: "I saw in short that my approach was an instrumental one; that I have increasingly sought to view them [ideas] as weapons in the personal struggles that every individual has for the revolution of his tensions, and in the struggles for power and order that every age has and every culture." And in his first chapter: "It [this approach] sees that the idea has meaning only in a dynamic context of a struggle over power and values."

This is straightforward enough, except for the unfortunate "only" in the last sentence. All ideas are weapons in the struggle for power—social or personal. But note: although "the shape that ideas take is relative to the culture and era in which they develop and are used; yet there are internal standards of validity in ideas themselves. The sum of these internal standards is what, for lack of a better term, we call 'science,' although the philosophers may prefer to call it 'truth'." Scientific ideas, then, are also weapons to achieve power in personal and social struggle. As weapons how do they differ from, or compare with, non-scientific weapons? It is important to know because, according to Lerner, "more than anything else, what will ultimately defeat fascism is its anti-scientific bias." Apparently, then, when the instruments (ideas) by which power is won are unscientific (false), the chances of power enduring are not as high as when it is achieved by ideas that are scientific (true). But this cannot be Lerner's meaning because it contradicts the whole burden of his discussion, which runs: whether or not ideas are accepted has nothing to do with their truth or falsity; if anything, the more an idea appeals to the "irrational" the more likely it is to make headway.

What does Lerner mean? It is hard to tell because at this point there is a double confusion in his discussion. He sometimes speaks of ideas as "valid" or "true" because they are effective in achieving power; and sometimes ideas are "valid" independently of their effectiveness. He seems to slip from the statement: *it is true that the use of certain weapons (ideas) is effective to achieve purposes of power;* to the statement: *weapons (ideas) which are effective in achieving purposes of power are true.* But from the true statement that some purposes can be achieved by a lie, a half-truth, a verbal incantation, it does not follow in the least that these "ideas" (weapons) are true.

Again, from his thesis that ideas are weapons in the fight for power, it follows that *all* social theories and doctrines are ideologies, i.e., instruments of power politics. But Lerner seems to shrink back from this conclusion and condemns *Realpolitik* for its cynicism in using ideas as weapons, despite his express statement that "ideas are necessarily weapons." Speaking of the Stalin-Nazi Pact which he admits caught him

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short, he says: "What we are dealing with is the cynicism of *Realpolitik* that still cuts across ideological considerations as it has always done, not because they are irrelevant but *because it uses and discards ideas as one might use and discard weapons.*" (my italics)

Is this not passing strange? Lerner has just got through telling us that all ideas are necessarily weapons but now he is in full flight from his own thesis and protests that *Realpolitik* uses even ideologies—which have no scientific warrant—as weapons. This is just what he should expect and applaud were he consistent.

Lerner now shifts to another distinction in order to save his thesis that ideas are weapons, and at the same time to differentiate between *Realpolitik* and other forms of politics. He distinguishes between the *purposes* for which ideas are used. What, he asks, is the "real difference between the totalitarianisms and the democracies in their attitude toward the use of ideas?" Both use ideas as weapons in the struggle for power but "the important difference is the difference between the instrumental approach to ideas and the manipulative approach. The *instrumental* approach recognizes that ideas are used in behalf of a way of life and in the struggles for its achievement. But it is also humanist. . . . The *manipulative* approach sees the common people only as so much material to be used. . . . If you view ideas instrumentally your primary regard is for their validity and for the social cohesion that will result. If you view them manipulatively, your only regard is for the use you can make of them."

I defy anyone to make sense of this passage if it is taken in conjunction with the other things Lerner has said. "Instrumental" previously meant a way of analyzing ideas; now it characterizes a way of *using* ideas. What makes ideas, used instrumentally, valid or true? Their purposes, or their effectiveness in achieving purposes? If it is their purposes, then what Lerner is saying is that good purposes make ideas true, and bad purposes make ideas false, which is absurd. If it is not the character of the purposes which makes ideas as weapons true, but the effectiveness of these ideas in achieving purposes, no matter what they are, then the distinction between the "instrumental" and "manipulative" approach loses all point. And why the correlation of these different approaches to ideas with democratic and totalitarian states? Do not totalitarians who "manipulate" ideas effect creative actions and social cohesion—sometimes too much so? Are not ideas in a democracy regarded for the use that can be made of them? And if, according to Lerner, ideas are necessarily weapons, how can anyone fail to regard them for the use that can be made of them? Besides, Lerner himself has insisted that democratic states are just as willing to betray ideologies as totalitarian states, that the "basic difference" between them is that in the second "the military, economic, and propaganda skill groups are openly part of the government," whereas in the first, "great subtlety is still required in order to conform with the rhetoric of democracy." Perhaps so. Why, then, are their purposes suddenly depicted as essentially different?

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It is not the lack of consistency in Lerner's writing which is so puzzling but the difficulty of assigning definite meaning to his words. It is quite doubtful whether the author of the sentences quoted actually knew what he wanted to say. It is a pity that Lerner speaks of his approach to ideas as "instrumental," for it may mislead people into thinking that it has something to do with Dewey's instrumental approach to ideas. For Dewey an idea is an instrument for the resolution of a difficulty or problem only in this sense: that the operations and experiments on symbols and things to which an idea directs us results in observations confirming or refuting the predictions that logically follow from its assertion. This enables us to determine first, whether we have an idea, second, its degree of truth or falsity in the light of the relevant consequences of acting upon it. Lerner has no idea of what an idea is nor an adequate conception of the method by which ideas are validated. All ideas are plans of action but not all actions are for the sake of power.

Sometimes a man's intellectual procedure is better than his doctrine. Let us therefore examine what Lerner does with his "instrumental approach" to ideas.

A careful reading of these essays discloses that where Lerner is at his interpretive best in uncovering patterns of feeling and intellectual bias, he provides very doubtful confirmation of his thesis. On the other hand, where he does treat ideas explicitly as weapons in the struggle for power, his interpretations shift with his own moods and political allegiance. Sometimes his interpretations are so wide of the mark that they suggest he is writing more with an eye to what his audience is likely to accept than with scrupulous regard for the evidence.

Of the set of ideas and institutional practices which comprise the New Deal, Mr. Lerner says late in 1933 that they represent "an approach to the corporate state," indeed, that in effect they constitute "a semi-dictatorship." By 1936, Lerner recognizes the New Deal as one of the crisis-democracies, almost the American equivalent of the Popular Front. And by 1939 (but before the Stalinazi Pact) he refers to that "something called the 'New Deal' that has put America today in the forefront of progressive governments." Mr. Lerner does not admit that his views of 1933 were wrong but merely that his phrases were "overstrong." But wrong he was either in 1933 or in the spring of 1939 (or in both years). An instrumental approach to the New Deal that can give us such incompatible readings within such a short span of time is not of very great help in showing how ideas are weapons in the struggle for power.

How Mr. Lerner's "instrumental approach" to ideas can get into the way of understanding them is evident in his patronizing discussion of Pareto, and in his remarks on the social process theory of American thinkers. He admits that Pareto has brilliant intuitions but when he states them they all reduce to the commonplace that human behavior is irrational. He fails to grasp the significance of Pareto's method, even though it is more of a program than an achievement, as well as its chief weakness,

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the neglect of the rôle of hypothesis. He is blithely unaware of the whole cluster of problems which center around the doctrine of the circulation of the élite. It is dismissed as an expression of Pareto's contempt for democracy even though many lovers of democracy regard it as a valid historical truth (not psychological as Pareto did) which challenges democrats to discover specific mechanisms to control bureaucratic abuse of power. As for Lerner's contention, which crowns his interpretation, that "Pareto's republic is now a reality—it is Hitler's totalitarian state,"—one can only say "Poppycock!", or more descriptively, that it is on a level of criticism which Malcolm Cowley has made famous.

American sociologists will be surprised to learn that the social process theory and its pendant, the belief in multiple factor causation, "through its function of rationalizing the adherance to the *status quo* and the fear of revolutionary action, . . has in the movement of events carried implications of a definitely anti-liberal character." Limitations of space prevent an adequate analysis of this statement, and its assumption that the only alternative to revolutionary action, as Lerner conceives it, is defence of the *status quo*. Suffice it to say that Lerner misstates both the theory of the social process and the multiple factor theory of causation; the first, by attributing a doctrine of unbroken and gradual continuity to its proponents, to be found, perhaps, in Savigny but not in Hegel, Marx, Simmel, Cooley, Dewey and others who did most to develop the idea; the second, by attributing to it a belief that all factors are equally relevant and of equal weight in explaining specific problems—a truly fantastic notion. Further, even in the mistaken form in which Lerner states these theories, it can easily be shown that they do not entail an acceptance or glorification of the *status quo*. The theories are logically compatible with more than one attitude towards a given social order.*

According to Mr. Lerner "the instrumental approach" to ideas differs from "the manipulatory approach" in respect to the *purposes* which it serves. We owe it, therefore, to Mr. Lerner to consider his purposes. Perhaps they will throw some light on his instrumental approach. Alas! his purposes are as baffling as his account of his method. For if we construe them from the methods by which he proposes to implement them, and the action in which he engages to further them, they hardly square with his avowed purposes. Lerner declares himself to be a democratic socialist, a humanist, and a liberal, if that word is detached from its connotations of economic laissez-faire. For a man of such purposes, his proposals in the essay "Freedom in the Opinion Industries" are truly astonishing. He would apply to the market of opinion a procedure analagous to that followed by the S.E.C. in the marketing of securities. His Truth in Opinion Act provides for the organization of a government board (this despite Lerner's acceptance of the Marxian theory of state), consisting, of course, of good and wise men, whose function would be, among other things, to

*Unfortunately, a good deal of Mr. Lerner's knowledge of writers of this school is derived second hand. When he speaks of their reliance on "Eichhorn's theory of the complexity of society and the multiplicity of factors," it is evident that he has read Albian Small not Eichhorn.

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regulate "anti-social propaganda" and "to ban material that is poisonous and spurious." The late Ernest Sutherland Bates in an otherwise kindly review of Lerner's book said of this proposal, "Anything more addlepated than this Stalinesque suggestion would be hard to imagine."

Precisely what is Stalinesque about it? Addlepated it is not. Nor is the suggestion itself new. Neo-Thomists have argued that we do not permit people to disseminate—or even to advertise—disease germs and poisons that hurt our bodies; why should we permit the peddling of lies and inflammatory half-truths that corrupt the mind? Lerner has rediscovered this argument but he is not a Thomist, and certainly would not entrust the Church with the administration of the Act. What is Stalinesque about the proposal—and here we have the central key to Lerner's line in thought and practice—is this: the willingness to use or condone any method of achieving and holding power for avowedly good causes like "socialism," without reflecting upon the consequences of those methods on the character and direction of power so achieved. This explains his "shock" at the Nazi-Soviet Pact and his belief that whereas only power-politics was the guiding imperative for Hitler, for Stalin "the survival of socialism (sic!) in Russia seems to have been the imperative." This also accounts for his systematic blurring over of the similarities between the German and Russian patterns of dictatorship, and his faith that despite these similarities "there is a deep and unbridgeable chasm" between the purposes of these dictatorships. It accounts, too, for his refusal to make *legitimate* distinctions in dealing with groups who, although opposed to each other, are both opposed *for different reasons* to a third group with which Lerner is at the moment sympathetic. In a savage and grossly unfair attack on Oswald Garrison Villard, which on Lerner's own thesis one might say reflects the struggle for power in the editorial offices of the *Nation*, he forges the crude amalgalm: "While he (Villard) approaches the anti-Roosevelt encampment by a different entrance from the anti-New Deal and isolationist reactionaries, he comes out at the same door." By the same logic this could have been said of Lerner in 1933.

It is this belief that holy purposes can be served by any means which provides the most charitable explanation of some of Lerner's public actions: his participation in the attempt organized by the Communist Party to disrupt the Commission of Inquiry into the truth of the Moscow trials; and, most shameful of all, his approval of another Communist Party document in which John Dewey and other outstanding liberals, progressives and radicals are denounced as "Fascists and allies of Fascists" for characterizing Stalinist Russia as a totalitarian culture.*

Although Lerner declares himself a socialist, he either cannot or will not see: (1) that socialism must be marked not only by a more efficient economy than capitalism but by a greater extension of democracy and cultural freedom than is already found in the most democratic of democratic capitalisms; (2) that the weight of historic evidence indicates that

*cf. *Daily Worker*, August 14, 1939.

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methods which Lerner has countenanced to further good causes, set up attitudes, and prepare the way for practices, which are incompatible with *both* a democratic culture and an efficient economy evaluated from the standpoint of the consumer; and (3) that it is possible without violating the spirit of the democratic process energetically to combat organized attempts to subvert democratic programs. Is Lerner's blindness to these points due to intellectual confusion? Or to opportunism?

Lerner professes fear lest concern with methods and means lead to "the fetishism of principles." Fetishism of any kind is unintelligent, including fetishism of goals that justify the use of *any* means. It is true that experience often compels us to qualify principles. But it is precisely because all principles are subject to qualification, that the particular principle with which we approach any specific situation is of supreme importance. What holds for scientific principles holds at this point for social and ethical principles; from the fact that they are all subject to correction, it does not follow that they are all equally valid. Qualifications of ethical principles must themselves be justified in part at least by other values which are involved in the concrete situation. Each situation may have its unique good to be achieved by action here and now but situations are continuous with each other. Today's action in some respect determines what we are prepared to do tomorrow. This is not a counsel to refrain from action but to act with consciousness of wider consequences as well as of those near at hand. Machiavelli was a patriot not a cynic. The trouble with Machiavellianism is not that it is cynical or even unintelligent but that it is not intelligent enough.

IMAGES OF REVOLT

NEW DIRECTIONS 1939. Edited by James Laughlin IV. Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions. $3.00.

THE COSMOLOGICAL EYE, by Henry Miller. New Directions. $2.50.

It is a great pity that Henry Miller's books have been banned in this country: the fact has naturally spread a haze of future pertinence around his name, making it hard to separate the force from the hysteria, and has also necessitated a very poor introduction. *The Cosmological Eye,* made up of fiction, fragments, essays and diatribes, and including various offhand and off-moment reveries on everything, gives Henry Miller not perhaps at his worst, because his worst pervades his best like a bloodstream, but at any rate in the worst possible context. His defects are clear enough on any page, but his qualities depend on space, on accumulation, and in order to

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approach him with any critical fairness one has first to suspend the critical sense and gulp the stuff down whole. It is probably because they are torn from *Tropic of Capricorn* that the selections in *New Directions* are so much truer an indication of Henry Miller than anything in the volume that is all his, but they are misleading too. One needs to have read *Capricorn* whole and fast in order to judge any part of it. One has to know the whole string of seductions not to be revolted by most of them separately, and have gone far toward accepting them to make even a qualified sense out of the comments on civilization.

The qualities then are of brashness, rawness, a general knocking down and splitting open. The work is a pæan of disgust and as such could, under certain conditions, be preface to a hymn of regeneration. "Henry Miller rejects the farce of civilization," Mr. Laughlin writes in his introduction. Aside from such problems as 1) whether civilization is really, in all its aspects, so comical, 2) whether the point is to reject civilization or to deal with it, or maybe to commit suicide, 3) whether there exists some civilization in France too or only, by some fluke of transportation, in America, 4) what is civilization?—the fact remains that most people are sufficiently emprisoned so that there *is* some power and refreshment in honest rejection, even if the object of it be somewhat confused. Henry Miller is doing battle, for the inner man, for the untrammeled soul, for sex in the D. H. Lawrence manner, for courage, against offices, systems, routines, and the intimate bureaucracy to which, among other things, the modern man is so inclined to subjugate himself. Against art too if that becomes necessary, though the word has degrees of meaning, being itself, elsewhere, a weapon and identified with "Man against the universe. *Against,* please notice." Above all, he is for the sense of the marvelous which he feels, rightly and passionately, to have been deodorized and advertized out of modern life. The intention in all this is of course a priestly one and the effect if it came off would be, as Lawrence's effects were, on the order of conversion.

The trouble is that for all the pseudo-volcanic energy of Miller's preaching, the best of it collapses on reflection to a few good perceptions and some healthy common sense. He has apt remarks to make about "the air-conditioned quality of the American nightmare," the value of surrealism, and neurosis: "the paralyzed neurotic is the symbol of the thwarting power of civilization," "with the increasing sway of the analyst there will occur an increasing prevalence of neurosis." Such observations have their place and truth, they hit hard sometimes though not deep, the illusion of depth in Miller's writing being bound to a too-personal nervous anger and therefore short-lived. They are blustering and sensible as H. L. Mencken's rages were and the chances are that they will be popular in this generation in the same way, and turn perhaps in the end to a similar dotage. Nothing grander than that. "My aim in writing," Miller says in a piece called, with something of a steal on Hart Crane, "The Brooklyn Bridge," "is to achieve a greater REALITY," and he lashes out at Proust and Joyce for being "caught in the stagnant flux" and doing nothing but "reveal the desperate

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plight of the modern man." "The highest aim of man, as thinker, is to achieve a pattern, a synthesis, to grasp life poetically; the highest aim of man as animal is to live out his instincts, obey his instincts, take him where they will." Presumably an adequate art would infuse both these aims into the desperate plight of the modern man and through that whole project at last "the greater REALITY." It is perhaps what is most sad in the case of Henry Miller that, far from revealing anyone's plight except his own, he does perceive that need and can only state it. State it hysterically, because he has turned more and more, it seems, into the thing he hates. And what is most to his credit is that in rejecting the farce of civilization he also rejects, consciously or not, one of its by-products: himself. There is no other reason for the violent candor and loathing of his perpetual autobiography.

This is a value. It is not perhaps the one he claims but it is a value just the same, and it has bearing on other lacks and eruptions in contemporary writing, as represented for instance by *New Directions 1939*. It would be more of a value obviously if more of it were communicated, but Miller is too much "against the universe," that is, too much a part of the turmoil he describes, to permit that. Putting it most simply: he is, except in flashes, a poor craftsman and it makes very little difference whether this is deliberate or not. He confuses art with specific art forms, certain exigencies of work with inadequacy of soul, and the inner laws of any matter with the codification of laws in general. It seems axiomatic that a writer must find in his material itself the means of expressing it, but Miller's rebellion strikes at this process too. If I am to reject myself then I must also reject what I believe to be true: logically, I should use the wrong word instead of the right one. The result can only be the meagrest statement of intention, and most of Miller's non-critical work does come to just that. Read the character portrait "Max": it is all lurking there somewhere but it is not *said*. How irritating it is to read at the end of a sloppy travel sketch, "Via Dieppe-Newhaven," that this was written to convey a sense of voyage: it does not: it conveys a writer not quite up to his medium. And how equally irritating when he does crash through—in the powerful family passage in *New Directions*, parts of the whirlpool section, the Western Union passages in *Capricorn*—because then what one glimpses is some intelligence and more feeling being cramped to the dimensions of a childish, circumscribed hate: something quite different from the male hatred of Céline who did keep clear enough, after all, to master his nightmare world.

But what matters is that in one aspect Miller's delirious self-consciousness, and his incompetence amounting in places to a *tour de force*, can hardly be thought of as individual qualities. *New Directions* is full of the same infantile irritation, the public howling over the private wound, the same incompetence. There are Kenneth Patchen's snarling frustrations—"all of us amassed like squirming maggots in the gut of being alive and waiting for something to snap that we may be dead"—Lawrence Durrell

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destroying himself in a cubicle, Dylan Thomas's diamond-pointed incoherence and his endless torture of rottenness. They are all beautifully in tune, with Henry Miller's drunken surrealism as the keynote because he is the most aware of the thing involved: they are in love with brutality. One would say that they feel themselves to be dying and that the most horrid physical and spiritual violence was the only way left of keeping a little blood going in their veins. And it is no good saying they should be positive, they should be serene, they should not be this way. The fact is that they are and that as such they strike out, sometimes pitifully, sometimes with real power, at a situation far more important, say, than Oscar Williams' little skill in manipulating his bloated images or William Carlos Williams' real skill in three-dimensional photography. "It is a Senegal with machines," Lorca said of New York. It might be said of many other places—it is easiest to say of America but other countries, even "democratic" ones, are quite capable of such reversion—and one could also say, as far as the artist is concerned, a Senegal with politics. But this is no "farce," and is it going to make anyone less of a Senegalese to throw out the politics and the machines? Nowadays a writer who has not the energy to civilize himself is actually forced to destroy himself in words, in a race against the other destruction.

It is pertinent that the one really whole and moving piece of work in *New Directions* is Lorca's poetic drama, hard as it is for us to receive the rhythms of Lorca's world. The concerns here are age-old—lust, fear, jealousy—and therefore have an archaic ring in spite of the keen thrusts of perception and image. The soil is the long inherited music and understanding of Lorca's people: one feels always the antiphonal process, the poet giving and receiving in the same language, and from this the play takes its organic quality. Its flaws, the rather unsuccessful infusion of fantasy in the last half for example, hardly trouble the impression of wholeness and strength. It is perhaps a help too in one's reading of "Blood Wedding" that we have nothing directly to learn from Lorca and can only delight in his work. Of the other poets in the volume, only Bishop and Fitzgerald have managed to avoid exhibitionism. Their poems are neat and exciting, Bishop's with scalpel-like metaphysical precision. The section on design continues to be valuable—another issue might deal with the suburban style in architecture and objects—and Harry Levin raises the specific weight of the volume enormously with the most lucid and learned piece of writing yet produced on the subject of *Finnegans Wake*.

ELEANOR CLARK

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POETRY IN A DRY SEASON*

MR. EVANS' TITLE is almost enough of a review for his book. While ailing in Syria, he wrote a song for every species of North American bird (I am no ornithologist, but there *can't* be any more of the damn things); it has seldom been better done. This is poetry which instructs its writer and entertains its reader (the functions of poetry, I have read); a missionary could hardly be more harmlessly employed. Mr. Evans is an amiable, unpretentious, and tolerant person—he apparently dislikes nothing but cigarettes—and won my heart immediately: more than I can say for most of the poets I am reviewing. But then, Mr. Evans is no poet.

If I were a dust-jacket, I should call *Farewell to Walden* "sonnets of love and social protest"; being what I am, I can say only that they are all Italian, all regular, and all bad. Miss Becker in her "streamlined hydroplane tractor," going "wherever the campaign Has need of us . . . aware Of enemies and directions," is a version of May Day I shall be sorry to forget. *Panorama* has the faults and favorites of Auden, MacNeice, Lewis, Prokosch, Spender, Allott, and all the others: class-reunion on the Ark, a charity bazaar at the Tower of Babel. One often sees an animal one likes, a phrase worth picking up cheap; but the whole is formless, meaningless, and useless.

Mr. Denny's family crest consists of a man with his mouth open; underneath is the inscription, "Who will deliver us from these Greeks and Romans?" For Mr. Denny is wonderfully academic—here at last is what everyone has been dreading, a poet to take Robert Hillyer's place (going on the safe assumption that Mr. Hillyer is dead): carefully "American" and "contemporary," a real "left-wing opportunist." (His own term for himself.) He uses a piece of slang as though he had just looked it up in the dictionary, and puts it in the middle of phrases that look as if he had found them illustrating a definition of poetic diction. He goes with "a pouch of pemmican, skis maybe, and a rifle" to search for "Liberty," a "sleeping woman" with "marble knees" and "wild, magnanimous eyes." Here is a typical description of a "steel hawk" (*i.e.*, an airplane): "His polished power fled Through the vast court of midnight like a prayer's wan word Whose syllable, in the shrine, flies whispering down the floor Toward the carved ear, unseen, of an unawakened god."

America Was Promises is a brilliant and malicious parody of Mac-

**Chorus of Bird Voices, Sonnets, Battle-Dore, Unconventional Verse, etc.*, William Bacon Evans (privately printed), 25c; *Farewell to Walden*, Florence Becker, The Exiles' Press, 50c; *Panorama*, Walter Roberts, Gordon Fraser, 1 shilling; *The Connecticut River and Other Poems*, Reuel Denny, Yale University Press, $2.00; *America Was Promises*, Archibald MacLeish, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 75c; *First Will and Testament*, Kenneth Patchen, New Directions, $2.50; *Collected Poems*, Robert Graves, Random House, $2.50; *A Turning Wind*, Muriel Rukeyser, Viking, $2.00; *The World I Breathe*, Dylan Thomas, New Directions, $2.50; *Another Time*, W. H. Auden, Random House, $2.00.

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Leish's public speaking period. Here on the platform, huge against the leaves, the sea, the night (courtesy of Maxfield Parrish); flanked by Freedom, Truth, Justice, stiff in their collapsible chairs, a nominating committee to be periodically apostrophized; stands the declaiming "I": he speaks for Man. How ready with accusation, exhortation, condemnation! And yet accused and condemned smile and applaud with the exhorted, like them do nothing: who could bear to soil that strained and sentimental solemnity, that innocuous generality, the last refuge of the patriot, with anything so petty as understanding or objection or action? The parodist makes the Public Speaker just another armchair fist-waver. The argument of *America Was Promises* might have been devised by a Y.M.C.A. secretary at a home for the mentally deficient—the reader ends by sympathizing with Mr. MacLeish, the parody is too exaggerated to be convincing. Whoever wrote it has been foolish enough to make an elaborate hoax of it (*Archibald MacLeish* is actually printed on the title-page); but no one is likely to believe that any poet would end any serious poem: "Believe/ America is promises to/ Take!/ America is promises to/ Us/ To take them/ Brutally/ With love but/ Take them./ [Big gap] O believe this!"

First Will and Testament is enormously like Cummings: surprise and sex and slang and sentimentality; Life, shiny with blood, dew, and printers' ink; jokes, puns, parodies, good, bad, and unbelievable; prostitutes, gangsters, and burlesque: America; and all the rest. But Mr. Patchen is less delicate, very much less original, and very much more disorganized, strained, and sentimental. (His poetry has a big violet streak of Original Swinburne-with-a-dead-baby; and his detailed version of "Sex is *wonderful*" gets much worse than Swinburne's "It's *wicked.*") He relies on violence, on bigness, on social protest for its own sake, on allusions to everything and everybody; he always works with a shotgun, his motto is *Too much!* He is influenced a great deal by Cummings and Joyce, most of all by general contemporary practice; even when he is at his best, you feel that you are so *used* to this sort of thing. Critics, who write about "sawdust . . . out of the heads of tenth-rate poets"—and on occasions, certainly, they do—he despises; his own criticism (p. 167-168) is nonsense, gush, or Homely Wisdom *à la* Frost ("the way to build a house is to build it"). He has a real, but disorganized, self-indulgent, and rather commonplace talent.

This is not Mr. Patchen's opinion of himself. (Nor is it that of William Carlos William, who almost invents a new language, a kind of system of emotional nonsense syllables, in his effort to praise Mr. Patchen properly. For instance, Mr. Patchen is "a hawk on the grave of John Donne." I should have called him a parrot on the stones of half a cemetery.) He hints at his full stature—when Mr. Patchen hints, the pigs run in from miles around—in his prose introduction to the first section of a seven-part introduction to a seven-volume poem which he is to write. It is to be called *The Hunted City;* it is "conceived as a life-work"; it "will be an attempt

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to write the history, spiritual, and real, of these times and this country"; it consists of these books "in preparation": *Horrible Ghost, Holy Ghost; The Shadow of the Gunman; Chamber Music for a Madman; The Counterfeit Is Crucified; The History of the Headless Statue; The Housecarpenter and the Hangman's Angel;* and *Lie There Loving, Lie There in My Own Honor.*

Robert Graves' poems are pleasant, rather interesting, nicely constructed, noticeably his own; he is agreeably sensible and able; so it is really unpleasant to decide that he is not a good poet, that even his best poems just miss. There is too much comment, fancy, anecdote; one thinks, "Sensible! rather witty! nicely put!" but never how moving or extraordinary or *right.* I did not enjoy Miss Rukeyser's poems as much, and disapproved of them more: *A Turning Wind* is full of gratuitous disorganization and obscurity, lapses in taste, hit-or-miss symbolism, muddy intensity; yet she might become a better poet than Graves. Her poems are too self-indulgent—they think themselves profound and difficult versions of a confused and obscure world, and do not notice, or take as inevitable, their own helpless confusion and obscurity. (They also don't notice about a hundred early-Auden echoes or imitations.) With luck, hard work, and some unkind self-regard, Miss Rukeyser would become a good poet; as it is she is no more than a promising one.

Dylan Thomas is very Welsh (he reminds me a little of Owen Glendower) and very good. People compare his poems with Crane's; but (I think) Thomas's are more original, show a more extraordinary feeling for language and rhythm, and are better organized. They often mean much less than Crane's—but when you consider Crane's meanings, this is not altogether a disadvantage. If poetry were nothing but texture, Thomas would be as good as any poet alive. The *what* of his poems is hardly essential to their success, and the best and most brilliantly written pieces usually say less than the worst. (This is a condemnation one cannot extend to the three or four best stories in *The World I Breathe,* which "mean" quite as much as anyone could wish.) Even at his worst he is a sort of *idiot savant* of language, a poet anyone interested in poetry will read. At his best he is the outside of a first-rate poet.

Now I have much to say about *Another Time,* and no space. Auden at the beginning was oracular (obscure, original), bad at organization, neglectful of logic, full of astonishing or magical language, intent on his own world and his own forms; he has changed continuously toward organization, plainness, accessibility, objectivity, social responsibility. He has gone in the right direction, and a great deal too far. *Another Time* is Auden's 18th century; rational, didactic, social, full of abstractions, comment, light verse—the forms are automatic, the language is plain or formally rhetorical. Now, in too many of the poems, we see not the will, but the understanding, trying to do the work of the imagination (I use these charming fictions for convenience's sake); they are moral, rational, manufactured, written by the top of the head for the top of the head. The

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mechanical operation of the fancy produces too many of the light poems. Auden has lost the quick animal certainty of his daemon, his "gift": the good poems are magnificently and carefully right, the bad ones full of effects that have almost the wrongness of a fallacy.

The poems say often now, "Be good." They ascend through moral abstractions, gnomic chestnuts, to a vagueish humanitarian mysticism. (Between the liberals who attacked Auden as a Communist and the Communists who attacked him as a liberal, the Communists were right: he is a Mann by more than marriage.) He wants to show "an affirming flame," and says that "life must live." Once few of Auden's poems had titles; now most of them are descriptions of, comments on, titles: famous writers (dozens), events, cities, *The Composer*, *The Novelist*, etc. They are really occasional. The comments are often interesting or clever or amusing; poetry is not comments. And there is so much that is simply *bad*: facetiousness, sentimentality, vagueness, commonplaceness. The *Epithalamion* sounds as if it were celebrating a marriage between the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences and J. Middleton Murry. And who would believe that *Auden* could end a somnambulistic sonnet on *The Composer*, "And pour out your forgiveness like a wine"?

But the handful of good poems makes up for it all. Clear, delicate, organized, intelligent; the statements of a poet with very much to say, and with both the genius and technique for its saying; the best poems in *Another Time* are worth all the rest of these books put together. The characteristic poetic strategy of our time—*refine your singularities*—is something Auden has not learned; so his best poems are very peculiarly good, nearly the most interesting poems of our time. When he writes badly, we can afford to be angry at him, and he can afford to laugh at us.

RANDALL JARRELL

Letters

SURREALISM ONCE MORE

Sirs:

From a regular reading of your excellent magazine almost nothing has interested me as much as the Surrealist controversy in your latest issue. When one considers how this question would be settled by the *New Masses*, pontifically, once and for all, and no further questions allowed, it is a welcome thing to read a publication which indulges in no religious dogmas of any kind.

The letter from Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler was full of poetry itself and eloquent, but I feel strongly that Miss Louis Bogan who speaks with great authority from many years of work in criticism and the creation of some of the finest-wrought poems of our time was nearer the center of things both aesthetically and politically. Her phrase: "if Surrealism should turn out to be the Gothic of our time," reduces to nothing a great deal of formularized dogma and wordy nonsense.

There is a vast difference between art and psychoanalysis, and most Surrealists do not know it, or forget it. All in all, judging from the best authorities and the actual product itself, it would seem that Surrealism as a definite method is a very

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bizarre, but very minor, variation on the main development of advancing art. Perhaps even its name indicates this. In art, there are many modes of being, but one reality.

Hoping that your magazine has a tremendous success, I am,

Very truly yours,
FRANCIS HAYNES,
Philadelphia, Pa.

—AND YET AGAIN

Sirs:

Couldn't something be done about the Star Dust Twins, Ford and Tyler? And why print stuff about revolutionary sadism? I am afraid most revolutionary US artists look on M. Breton's "With Gun and Camera Down the Alimentary Canal" as so much adolescent comedy, like Fleishman's funny paper adds, yeast for pubescent pimples. Now that the leaders of fumistic onanism are themselves middle-aged, the humor wears thin, thin. If anybody in US poetry is the inheritor of the late Sexual Revolution, if anybody has "raised the SR to a new plane of struggle" it is precisely Louise Bogan, not Tyler, Ford, Forrest Anderson, et al. Considering that both Dali and Roehm, in identical language, have spoken of the "inalienable right of the Race to pederasty," I think the communist movement, purely for reasons of hygenic convenience, would do well to avoid such nonsense without getting priggish about it. Somehow I just can't see Leon Davidovitch in drag, or Rosa smoking stogies in the Select. Maybe me and GLK Morris are getting out of date, but I still think Der Stijl and the Bauhaus represent the only valid fulfillment of 20th Century art; surrealism, to me represents a reaction, a sentimental, IE a cowardly reaction. (Dedalus to Mulligan: "The sentimentalist is he who would enjoy without incurring the immense debtorship for a thing done.")

Sincerely,
KENNETH REXROTH,
San Francisco, Cal.

ONE READER'S REACTIONS

Sirs:

Congratulations on the most splendid literary magazine in this country.

I like everything about it, except its title. That smacks too much of the days when it was tied up with the Communist Party. I would have preferred a completely clean break. You might call it: *The Vanguard*, which would be much nearer the spirit of your magazine and its aims.

I am interested in the verse you print, though I seldom enjoy it. It is your only weak point. Damnable as most of the poetry printed in the *New Masses* is, yours occasionally approaches the same low level of literary degradation. I am not judging the poetry of either magazine from a political point of view, but from the standpoint of literary integrity and awareness. Still, I suppose it is extremely difficult to find any worth printing. There is so much of the fake article around in every quarter, it is hard to find any of the genuine thing. In a time of chaos like this, a poet instead of trying the impossible, as most of them do try: to keep up with it, should actually be moving in the opposite direction. He should be slowly and carefully examining the very basis on which any poetry worthy of the name can be written now. Of course this is true of the position of genuine artists in any period of change or revolution.

Leaving verse, I would like to say that I found the January-February issue unusually fine. The selection from the novel of Victor Serge, the author of the illuminating *From Lenin to Stalin*, reveals an immensely beautiful style, and the poignant difficulties of revolution are superbly expressed. The general conclusion's of Lionel Trilling's carefully written essay were most significant in their reference to "the broadest possible democracy." The wild poetry of the selection from Nicholas Calas brings a new tone in criticism. One may wonder, though, if the violent beauty of the Calas method does not sometimes betray him into rather absurd dogmas and monstrous simplifications. The reference to the pleasure to be derived from the slaughter of animals reminds one once again that there are

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certain values which can and must be separated from the class struggle, and some that cannot. Children must learn to see much that they love be maimed or killed, but they will not learn it by slaughtering animals. We work for a world in which the personalities of animals, as well as of human beings, will be respected.

The review of the two volumes dealing with John Dewey were more than fair to both Dewey and Hook. Mr. Hook may still claim to be a Marxist, but certainly this person's "Marxism" is an odd thing. It is nothing but a stew of Social Democracy, reformism and several other old ingredients, now served up as something new and significant. With this as a background, Mr. Hook has manipulated the life and work of Dr. Dewey into a persona for his own position, but it is anything but an accurate image of the real inclusions and limitations of Dewey's thought.

May I close with best wishes for the continued growth of your magazine. In its breadth and devotion to the truth it stands almost alone in this country and perhaps in the whole world. In a barbarous time like this, it is unsayably wonderful to know that there is one place where the free, inquiring mind is still honored.

Sincerely yours,
CULBERTSON MYERS,
Wyncote, Pa.

CONTRIBUTORS

STEPHEN SPENDER is the well-known poet and critic. He is now associated in the editing of a new English literary monthly, *Horizon*. "September Journal" originally appeared in *Horizon*. . . . ELIZABETH BISHOP is a frequent contributor to PARTISAN REVIEW. She lives in Florida. . . . JOHN PEALE BISHOP is well known for his poetry and criticism. . . . BYRON A. VAZAKAS is a young poet who lives in Reading, Pa., and whose work we first printed in our "Anthology of Nine American Poets" in February, 1938. . . . MARYA ZATURENSKA has contributed verse to the *New Republic*, *Poetry*, and other magazines. Last year a book of her poetry was published. . . . DELMORE SCHWARTZ contributes verse and criticism to the *Southern Review*, the *Kenyon Review*, and *New Directions*. This is the first story of his to appear since "The Statues," which appeared in the May, 1938, issue of PARTISAN REVIEW. His translation of Baudelaire's *Season in Hell* was recently published by New Directions press. . . . MARY MCCARTHY was formerly an editor of PARTISAN REVIEW. . . . JAMES T. FARRELL'S latest book is *Tommy Gallagher's Crusade*. His new department, "The Cultural Front," will appear regularly. . . . FRANK N. TRAGER is an editor of the *Socialist Review*. . . . SIDNEY HOOK, a frequent contributor to PARTISAN REVIEW, is professor of philosophy at New York University. . . . ELEANOR CLARK is a young writer living in New York City. . . . RANDALL JARRELL, two of whose poems appeared in our last issue, teaches English at the University of Texas.

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